Under the Crescent and Among the Kraals

Lena Leonard Fisher

A Street in Old Algiers

UNDER THE CRESCENT AND AMONG THE KRAALS

A Study of Methodism in Africa

By
LENA LEONARD FISHER, Lit.D.

How little you knew of the African puzzle!
—*Dan Crawford*

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FOREWORD

An account of the activities of Methodism in Africa involves a recital of matters many and varied. The field includes all sorts of climates, from the frozen snows of the Atlas to the burning heat of Africa's heart. The trail of the Methodist missionary winds away over mountain, forest, desert, through the bush and the region of the tall grass. The folks he seeks to reach are of all complexions and two clearly defined forms of belief. Methodism in Africa as elsewhere flings her line afar.

These chapters do not constitute a report or a summary of reports of Methodist work in Africa. Rather they are designed to assemble a setting for the activities of our missions there. While the operations of the church at large are outlined, particular emphasis is laid upon those of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society among the women and children of that dark land. The incidents related are largely drawn from the actual experience of our own missionaries. Personal observations by the author in North Africa have been utilized in portraying this Mohammedan field. Authorities have been widely consulted and, where material is used, credit is given in the text.

May a sympathetic reading of these pages mean to the women of Methodism a more ready response to the appeal of hands that beckon from Africa—those shackled by Islam or toil-hardened from the kraal.

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CHAPTER I

The Land and the Crescent

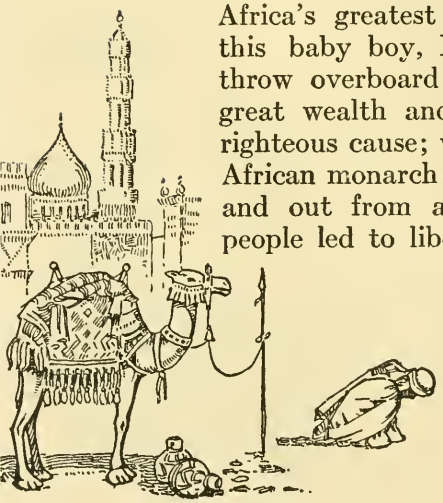
ONLY as a big black blot upon the missionary horizon of the world is Africa known to folks a-plenty who call themselves Christians. Very far at the "back of beyond" in the missionary vision of many, lies mirage-like this great continent, second only in size to Asia, in the family of continents. Upon it you could place Europe, the United States and Alaska, and then add the Chinese empire. Quadrupling in extent the United States, and trebling Europe, the big, black, triangular blot spreads out until it covers a quarter of the territory of the globe. That distinguished traveler who once remarked that Africa's bigness is its biggest problem spoke quite to the point, although Africa is a land of many problems.

THE DARK CONTINENT

It was Henry M. Stanley who, after wandering its tortuous ways in his search of David Livingstone, dubbed Africa "The Dark Continent." Dark it has surely been from prehistoric periods, shrouded in the

dimness of speculative theories, down to the dark doings of the later days, when, after the invasion of its shores by peoples whose very names are all but forgotten, there came one European nation after another, moved by the common impulse to wear the proud title of can-opener to Africa.

Yet through the darkness enveloping it, as far back as four thousand long years ago there gleamed through the curtains of its night the bright light of Divine Providence. That Providence set a Joseph in Egypt. Through him it cradled into strength a great race for its future destiny. The accounts of a patriarchal father, the guilty brothers and Benjamin the beloved could ill be spared from the treasure-store of divine truth in story form which through the ages has been woven into the fabric of godly character. The finding by a real princess of a tiny, crying baby in a rush cradle hidden among the tall reeds which etched out the banks of Africa's greatest historic river; the story of this baby boy, Moses, who later chose to throw overboard his prospective chances for great wealth and political prominence for a righteous cause; who dared to brave an angry African monarch with "Thus saith the Lord," and out from a terror-mad, plague-stricken people led to liberty a bondaged race — such



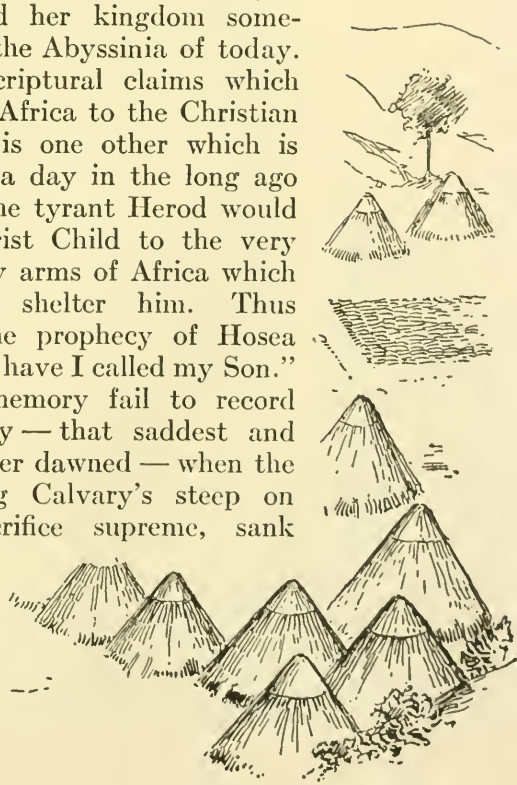
could not be omitted from the mother-stories told at bedtime to the children of Christian lands.

It is probable that Solomon's servants, voyaging with those of Hiram, "who had knowledge of the sea," to Ophir for gold for the great king, found it down in southeast Africa — Rhodesia of today, if you please, which we consider Methodist missionary ground.

The Queen of Sheba, who tried Solomon's wisdom by difficult questions and went back to her people with the praises of Jehovah upon her lips, probably had her kingdom somewhere in the region of the Abyssinia of today.

But beyond such scriptural claims which can be voiced by dark Africa to the Christian world for light, there is one other which is paramount. For upon a day in the long ago when the jealousy of the tyrant Herod would have hounded the Christ Child to the very death, it was the dusky arms of Africa which were outstretched to shelter him. Thus through Africa was the prophecy of Hosea fulfilled: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son."

And, too, let not memory fail to record that upon another day — that saddest and most tragic day that ever dawned — when the Son of Man, climbing Calvary's steep on his way to the sacrifice supreme, sank



beneath the cross, it was Africa, in the person of Simon of Cyrene, which bore its direful weight.

ON THREE SEAS

The well-trodden paths of Palestine were the only ones taken by the Master, the little Sea of Galilee the only water sailed by him in the course of his earthly ministrations, in his quest for souls. St. Paul, that first, that incomparable, missionary to foreign fields and folks, knew but the "Great Sea" in his journeys — the Mediterranean of our day.

Methodist missionaries since 1832, moved by the same motives — love to God and duty to mankind — which moved Jesus Christ and St. Paul to perform their great tasks, have been sailing three great seas — the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Indian — that upon the shores of Africa they might find some gateways which would lead to the vast, unknown regions beyond, with their races and tribes to be reached and lifted into the light.

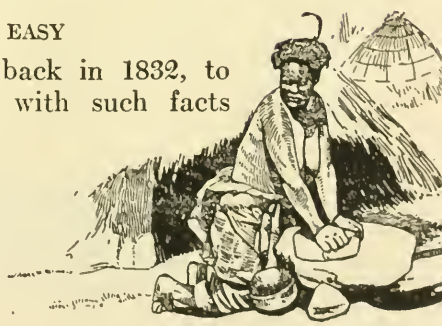
Religiously one can scarcely yet see in Africa the first red streaks of a new day's dawn. Science and commerce and trade have outstripped the church in the race to possess it. The fault has not lain at the door of the few missionaries, men and women,

who through the years have toiled in torrid Africa. They have "done their bit" to redeem the dark old continent, and have done it well. Their motives, different from those of some who have exploited Africa, have been unassailable, their service self-sacrificing, persevering, efficient, royal. Methodist Episcopal missionaries are not behind the others who in the early and latter days have been chinking away persistently at Ethiopia's wall of darkness, and letting in the light.

However, chinking away in but six spots in the old wall so seemingly impenetrable, and of such monstrous proportions, would not seem to indicate its speedy demolition. This is not the day for Jericho episodes. It is true that were full light to flood Africa tomorrow our denominational flag would be seen to fly in six centers only. Classical North Africa, the Black Republic (Liberia), Angola, Rhodesia, Portuguese East Africa and the Belgian Congo — this last and newest in the very hot, burning heart of the continent — figure up Methodism's measure of missionary activities on African soil.

THE TRAIL MADE EASY

It was no small matter, back in 1832, to decide in cold blood, and with such facts



as were at hand staring you in the face, to go to Africa. Folks seldom went there then unless circumstances compelled, or they were slave traders or some other sort of adventurers. Melville B. Cox saw four months pass him from the day when, on the ship Jupiter, he "hauled off in the stream at Norfolk," until, anchoring off Monrovia, he cried with rapture, "I have seen Liberia and live!"

It is altogether a different matter to think of Africa as the objective of a journey today. Such a jaunt is only a trifle more than commonplace. In even a moderate-sized gathering of cultured and traveled folks in our time, there will be somebody — or somebodies — who has had a stateroom on a ship making Algiers at least a port of call. Some one has affirmed that so studded with French harbors is the northern coast of Africa that the Mediterranean is well on the road to becoming, as Napoleon once prophesied, a French lake.

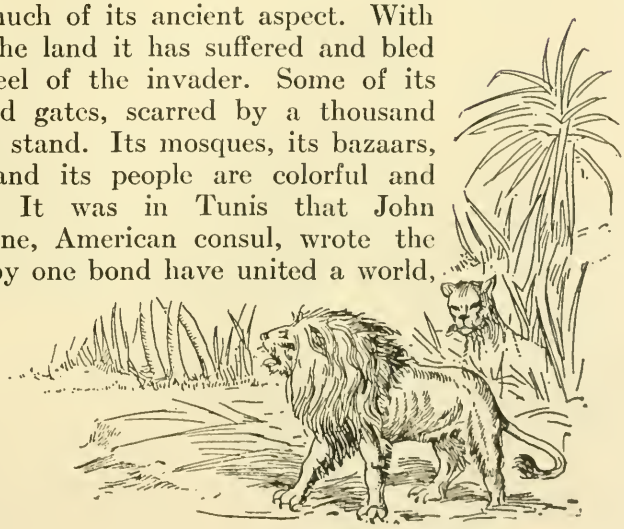
THE COAST OF THE PIRATES

The very sound of the name "Barbary Coast," in school days not so long ago, smacked of mystery and pirates, and made your hair feel like rising on end, whether it did or not. The pirates have disappeared

along with their booty and blood, but the fascination of the shores of North Africa, with their wild history and storied romance, overhung always with a veil of oriental, indefinable, delicious mystery, must forever allure.

This North Africa region was one of the outstanding classical centers of the ancient time. If you have nothing else to do and all the money necessary, you may hunt back a bit from the shore and toward the great desert for Roman remains, and find more of them than you can find in Italy. You may see an arch gleam white through palm trees, or sometimes the broken curves of an old Roman aqueduct — or even an amphitheatre so well preserved that you might almost look for the entrance of the gladiators.

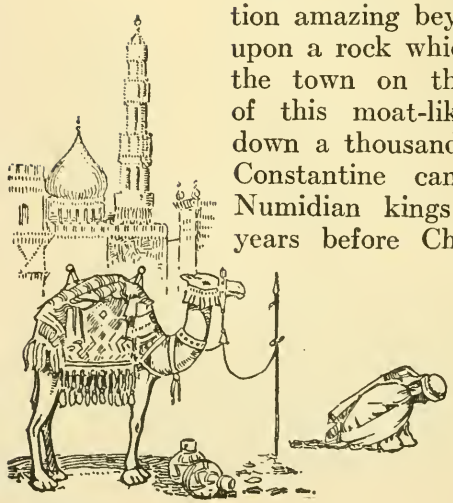
Tunis is called by its admirers the most beautiful city in all Africa. Though founded before Utica or Carthage it retains its ancient name, and much of its ancient aspect. With the rest of the land it has suffered and bled under the heel of the invader. Some of its old walls and gates, scarred by a thousand assaults, still stand. Its mosques, its bazaars, its palaces and its people are colorful and picturesque. It was in Tunis that John Howard Payne, American consul, wrote the lines which by one bond have united a world,



"Home, Sweet Home." Here he died in 1852. In the little graveyard of St. George's English Church his body lay, until brought back to rest in the homeland of his heart.

Outside of Tunis you may stand among the ruins, gray and desolate and sunken deep in sand, of ancient Carthage, once Rome's proud rival. You may look out beyond at her once famous harbor, now choked with silt and sand and utterly disused. Also you may reverently tread the sands of the old Roman arena at Carthage, once stained with the blood of the lovely young Christian martyrs, Perpetua and Felicitas. A hard heart indeed must be that behind eyes which even today can read the tale of their torture and death without tears. They died in the long ago for the same faith which Christian women now seek to reëstablish in the land whose soil was hallowed by their blood.

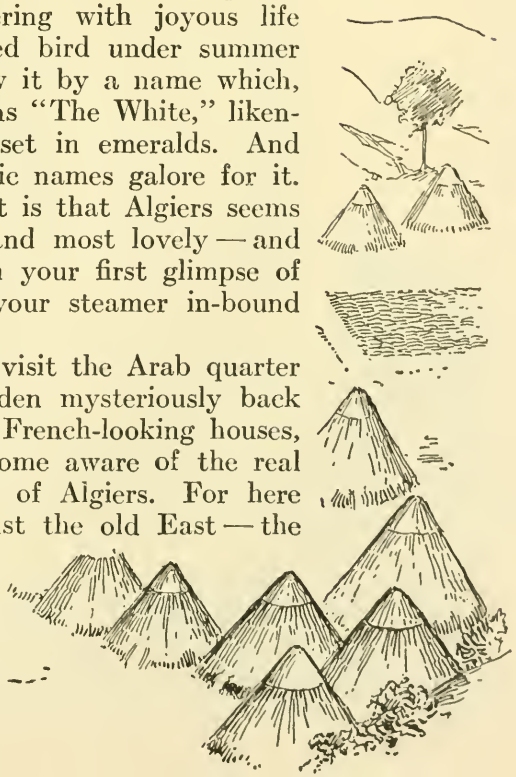
Then there is Constantine, with a situation amazing beyond imagination. It is built upon a rock which tops a ravine surrounding the town on three sides. The sheer walls of this moat-like ravine in places plunge down a thousand feet to the River Rummel. Constantine can count backwards to its Numidian kings who reigned two hundred years before Christ. Julius Cæsar changed



once its name to his own, and later Constantine to his. You may walk over paths today which were once trodden by Cyprian, the bishop beloved, during the days of his long exile from Carthage. Verily Constantine is hoary with history.

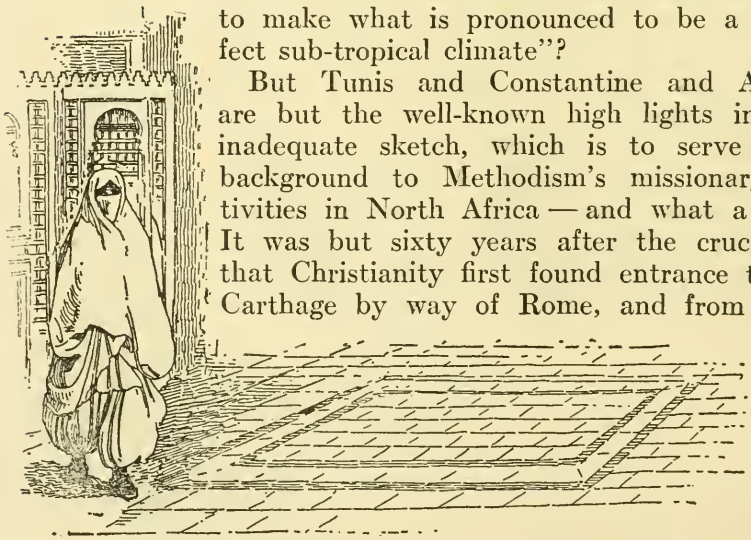
They say it is quite impossible to describe Algiers and there is no denying the fact that your vocabulary does seem to run short even in an attempt at it. At any rate it is one of the bright spots France has made on the Mediterranean. There are all sorts of pet names for this old city, once a pirate stronghold, now fluttering with joyous life like some white plumed bird under summer skies. The Arabs know it by a name which, being interpreted, means "The White," likening it to a diamond set in emeralds. And besides, there are poetic names galore for it. The plain English of it is that Algiers seems extraordinarily white and most lovely — and French — as you catch your first glimpse of it from the deck of your steamer in-bound from Gibraltar.

But it is when you visit the Arab quarter — the old town — hidden mysteriously back of the modern, white, French-looking houses, that you suddenly become aware of the real charm and fascination of Algiers. For here you will rub up against the old East — the



real thing, with its queer stair-stepped streets; its houses which turn their backs upon you and lean toward one another in a neighborly fashion overhead; its veiled, soft-treading women who flit ghost-like by; its dirty little eastern shops where dignified, turbanned proprietors dispense, for a consideration, strange things to eat, or dangle before your fascinated eyes wonderful products of oriental handicraft; and — its smells!

When you are sojourning in old Algiers you have trekked a thousand miles south from Paris, and are in a region where the whole countryside basks in the golden warmth of an African sun. To be sure in the summer the withering heat from the Sahara oven sweeps over this region, but are there not two snow-crowned Atlas ranges in the rear, to order it back? And does not the refreshing coolness of the blue sea in front add its quota to make what is pronounced to be a "perfect sub-tropical climate"?



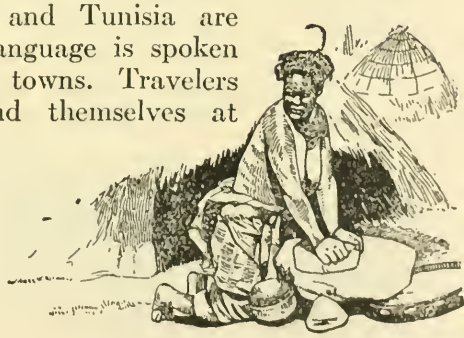
But Tunis and Constantine and Algiers are but the well-known high lights in this inadequate sketch, which is to serve as a background to Methodism's missionary activities in North Africa — and what a field! It was but sixty years after the crucifixion that Christianity first found entrance to old Carthage by way of Rome, and from there

spread throughout what is Methodism's ground today. Later, across this very stretch, drove the Arabian Mohammedan conquerors, leaving death and ruin in their track and all but obliterating the fact that the religion of Jesus Christ had once flourished here. Many a time has the Barbary Coast been swept by invasions. Now have come the Methodists, and in the land where once rang the wild cry of Moslem triumph, as the False Prophet was enthroned, the heralds of Jesus Christ proclaim him King of kings and Lord of lords.

FOLKS FIRST

After all, folks in almost any part of creation are much more interesting than the places they happen to live in, or than geography, history or climate. That traveler who uses much of his time in a strange place in getting acquainted with the folks will learn much of importance which cathedrals and art galleries cannot teach him — so the market places should not be neglected.

Methodist missionaries here must perforce speak the language of the nation of the tricolor, since both Algeria and Tunisia are French colonies, and the language is spoken in all the cities and larger towns. Travelers in French Africa will find themselves at



serious disadvantage if their list of available languages does not include French. Either in a case of straight shopping with the coin of the realm, sous and francs, or in a more tragic event where exchange is a part of the process, and all of it is a hurry-up affair, it must be depended upon. Likewise, if you speak Italian or Spanish you will, in a jaunt across Methodist North Africa, have ample use for them, for in Tunisia thousands of Italians who have swarmed to her smiling shores have found homes. West of this, even in Algiers itself, there is an emphatic Spanish element, while no visit to the larger cities and towns would be quite complete without at least a look at the Jewish quarters — real ghettos.

ABORIGINES AND INVADERS

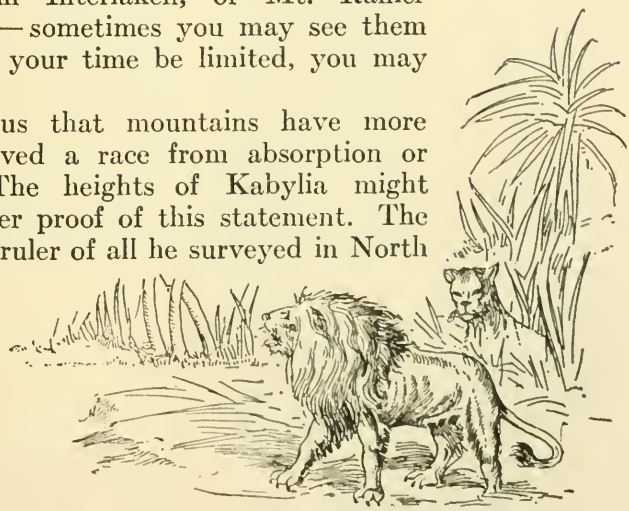
The two races, however, the Berber and the Arab, which make up the distinctive Moslem population of Methodist territory along the Mediterranean, are those with which, figuratively speaking, we should like to neighbor in this book. The work among these is our big task in North Africa, because it is here that Methodism has a more direct contact with pure Mohammedanism than possibly in any other place in the world.

The Berber is very little talked about.

Even his racial name has a strange sound to many ears. Yet numerically he has passed the Arab in this field. There are nine millions or more of him. No one actually knows where he hails from. His origin may have been Semitic, but conquered successively by Carthaginians, Phœnicians, Romans, Vandals and Arabs, the Berber of today represents a composite of all of them. His most interesting industrial product is a peculiar and highly varnished red and yellow pottery, decorated with traditional Roman and Phœnician designs.

These strange folks, probably the primeval race of North Africa, now have their habitat in the great stretch of snow mountains whose dim outline may occasionally, and for a few elusive moments, be seen from Algiers, above that of the nearer mountains, which is an everyday sight. Seeing the mountains of Kabylia from Algiers is like viewing the Jungfrau from Interlaken, or Mt. Ranier from Seattle — sometimes you may see them and again, if your time be limited, you may not.

They tell us that mountains have more than once saved a race from absorption or extinction. The heights of Kabylia might furnish another proof of this statement. The Berber, once ruler of all he surveyed in North



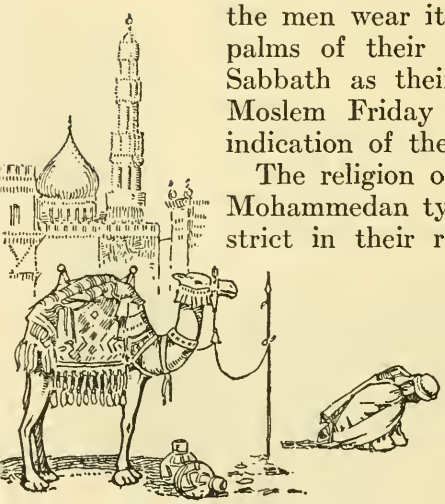
Africa, was long ago pushed back into these mountain fastnesses by the Arab invaders. Though yielding under vigorous protest to the demand which eventually attached him to the wheels of France's victorious chariot on its way through North Africa, he continues to build his house of sun-baked clay in his mountain stronghold, speak his own language and retain his own character and ways, which are not at all those of his Arab conquerors.

As compared with the Arabs, the Berbers with their fair complexions, blue eyes and red hair are more physically fit, more capable and far more progressive.

THE CROSS BEFORE THE CRESCENT

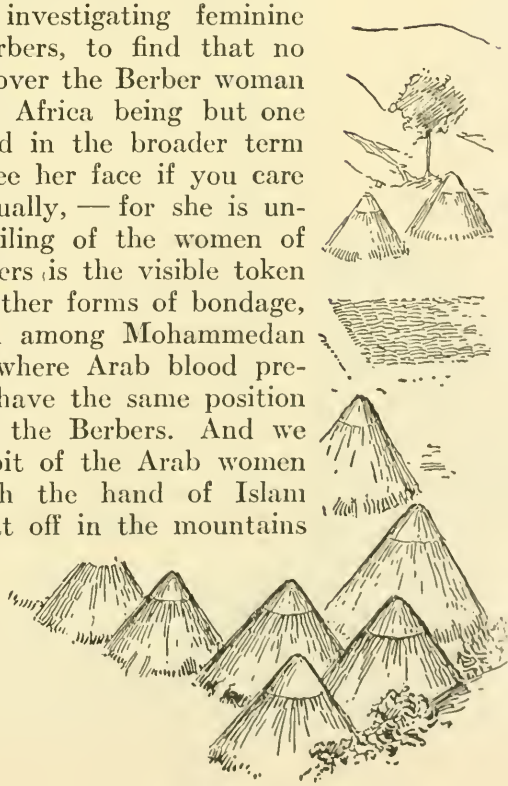
Some scholars hold that the Berbers at the time of the Arab invasion were at least nominal Christians. They point out in proof of their view the fact that many Berber women wear the sign of the cross tattooed upon their foreheads between the eyes, while the men wear it upon their arms and in the palms of their hands. The keeping of our Sabbath as their prayer day instead of the Moslem Friday would also seem to be an indication of the same thing.

The religion of the Berbers is of a "pale" Mohammedan type. That is, they are not so strict in their religious observances and are



far from being so fanatical as the Arabs. It is intimated by missionaries in our North African field that the antipathy existing between the two races, coupled with the Berber's modified Moslemism, affords an unusual avenue of approach by which Christianity may reach this ancient people.

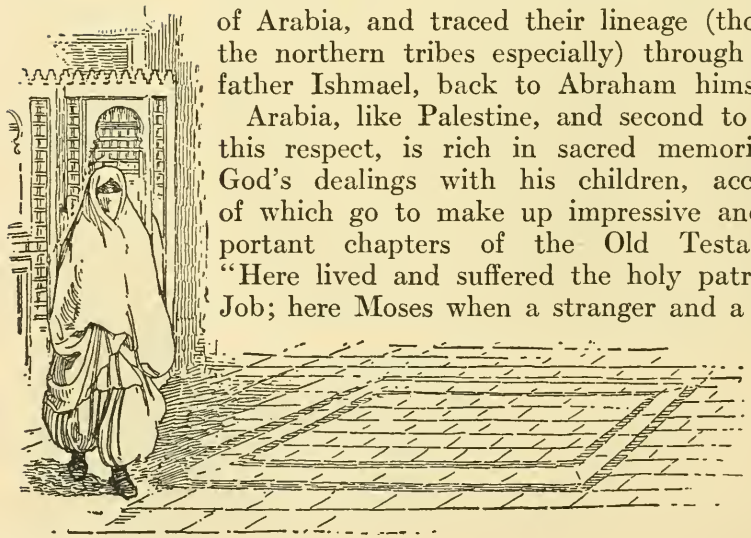
Another point of difference between the two races is in their estimate of women. An eminent traveler in the Orient remarks that the effect of the veil and ordinary style of dress of the Mohammedan woman is to hide and unsex her. Convinced of this, it is a distinct relief, in investigating feminine affairs among the Berbers, to find that no matter where you discover the Berber woman (the Kabyles of North Africa being but one tribe of many included in the broader term "Berber") you may see her face if you care to — a pretty one, usually, — for she is unveiled. And the unveiling of the women of the tribes of the Berbers is the visible token of their release from other forms of bondage, more or less universal among Mohammedan women. In no tribe where Arab blood predominates do women have the same position and regard as among the Berbers. And we are glad, knowing a bit of the Arab women of North Africa, with the hand of Islam heavy upon them, that off in the mountains



of Kabylia there are those who are handsome and gay, who enjoy at least a measure of regard from their men, who wear bright dresses of yellow and red, clasped with great brooches of silver and coral, and who may look out upon their own lovely mountains with unveiled eyes.

THE ARAB

By no means is the original habitat of the second race to which Methodist missionaries in North Africa are giving particular attention — the Arabs — to be found in "The Thousand And One Nights," though as encountered there you are more than likely to fall victim to their unique fascination. The name "Arab" began to be known in Solomon's day, but long before the towers and turrets of his great temple arose, the Arabs wandered over the mountains and deserts of Arabia, and traced their lineage (those of the northern tribes especially) through their father Ishmael, back to Abraham himself.

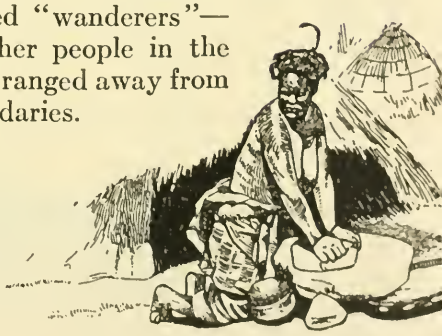


Arabia, like Palestine, and second to it in this respect, is rich in sacred memories of God's dealings with his children, accounts of which go to make up impressive and important chapters of the Old Testament. "Here lived and suffered the holy patriarch, Job; here Moses when a stranger and a shep-

herd, saw the burning, unconsuming bush; here Elijah found shelter from the rage of persecution; here was the scene of all the marvelous display of divine power and mercy that followed the deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian yoke and accompanied their journeyings to the Promised Land, and here Jehovah manifested himself in visible glory to his people."

The geography of Arabia is not to be discussed here, except as out from its desolate wastes where the "wind of the desert" is born, and the mirage lifts its deceptive beauty to the sight of the famished traveler, where storied rivers run, and sunsets fall upon gracefully pendant date palms; out from its legends and ruins, and traces of lost empires, and mayhap even from where was the cradle of humankind itself, has come the race whose descendants our missionaries in North Africa now strive to reach and save.

From the day when unhappy Hagar and her infant son became wanderers in the wilderness of Beersheba, the descendants of Ishmael, who according to divine promise and in a peculiar and definite sense have preserved themselves a "nation," have been indeed "wanderers"—nomads. More than any other people in the world, perhaps, the Arab has ranged away from his natural geographical boundaries.



A missionary journey, whose instruments were fire and sword, carried the Arabs, along with the Moslem faith with which they sought to sweep the world, into North Africa. This occurred in the course of the first chapter of Moslem conquest in the years immediately succeeding the death of the Prophet in 632 A.D. There ever since they have been.

Generally speaking, our missionaries meet the Arabs as the "town dwellers" in their homes tucked away in the narrow, filthy, crooked streets of the native quarters of great cities like Algiers, or as "men of the desert," in their tents of black or brown camel's hair. In their ways of living, their dress, food, dwellings, customs and government, these desert nomads are as their fathers were thousands of years ago.

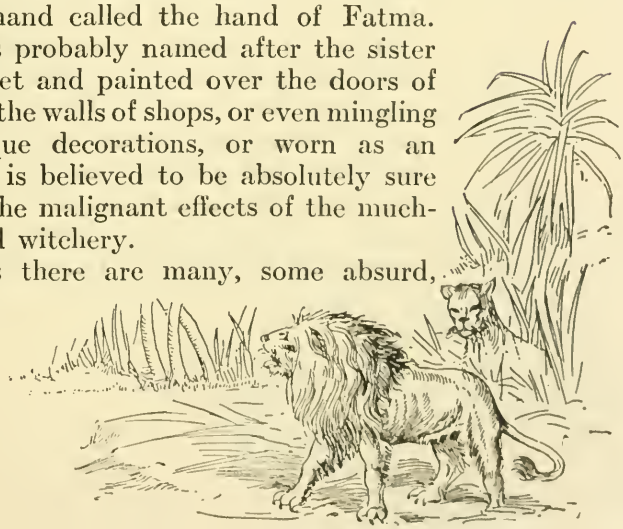
Dr. Zwemer writing of the physical characteristics of the Arabs says: "The typical Arab face is round-oval, but the general leanness of the features detracts from its regularity; the bones are prominent; the eyebrows long and bushy; the eye small, deep-set, fiery black or dark, deep brown. The face expresses half-dignity, half-cunning, and is not unkindly, though never smiling or benignant. The figure is well-knit, muscular, long-limbed, never fat." As to his character, the same authority declares that the Arab is polite, good-natured, lively, manly, patient, courageous, and hospitable to

a fault, but that at the same time he is contemptuous, untruthful, sensuous, distrustful, proud and superstitious.

SUPERSTITION'S SWAY

But whether of the city or the desert, you will find the Arab reeking with absurd superstitions and legends. The evil eye is always a terror, and is only to be warded off by the wearing of amulets and charms. Beads, old coins, teeth, holy earth in small bags, a Koran or chapter from it, are all worn for their beneficent effects. A universal superstition is the belief that to his everlasting undoing there may be cast upon his person or belongings, the ill luck of the "evil eye." Let a stranger, particularly one not a follower of the Prophet, look intently at something an Arab wears or carries, and he will immediately moisten his finger and pass it over the article in question in order to check the spell. A certain token of good luck is the image of a hand called the hand of Fatma. This fetish is probably named after the sister of the Prophet and painted over the doors of houses, upon the walls of shops, or even mingling among mosque decorations, or worn as an ornament, it is believed to be absolutely sure to ward off the malignant effects of the much-to-be-dreaded witchery.

Of legends there are many, some absurd,

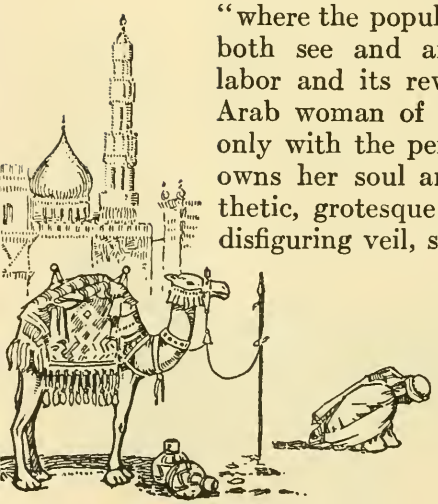


some beautiful in their poetic delicacy. In the former class is the belief that the eyes of a camel are like magnifying glasses, increasing the size of his master seven times. His master may beat and abuse the creature, though close to teeth and hoofs, and not fear, as he appears seven times larger than he is. "It is not," says the Arab story-teller, "because the camel is stupid, nor yet because he is timid. It is because of a wise provision whereby Allah suited him to the weakness of men."

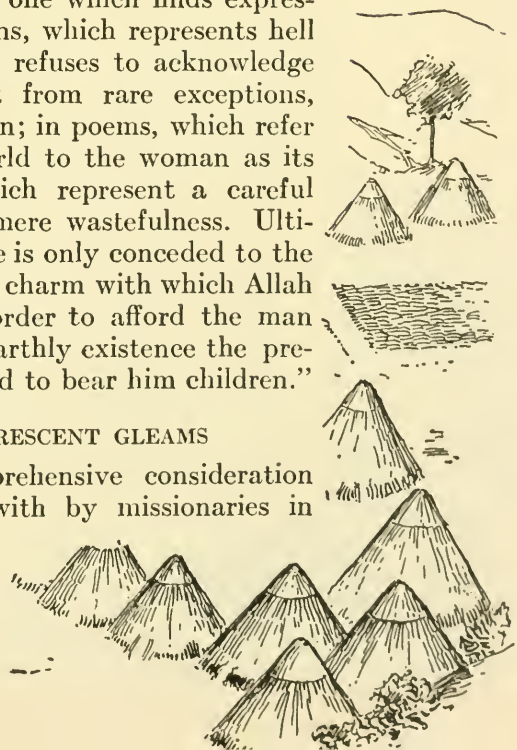
Again, we hear the pretty legend of the origin of the date-palm, the desert Arab's most priceless treasure, as springing up from a few grains of dust which fell from the fingers of Allah, as Adam was created.

ISLAM APPRAISES WOMEN

There is evidently a sharp contrast between the Berber woman in North Africa and her Arab sister. The Berber in her Kabylia home lives, as one writer has said, in a country "where the population is complete, and women both see and are seen, and share alike in labor and its reward." If the North African Arab woman of the cities walks abroad, it is only with the permission of the husband, who owns her soul and body. Even then her pathetic, grotesque figure in hideous clothes and disfiguring veil, strikes the heart with unutter-



able pity. In the long ago, it is said, Arab girls were often buried alive. Dr. Zwemer declares that Mohammed improved on the barbaric method and discovered a way by which not *some* but *all* females could be buried alive without being murdered — namely, the veil. That the female of the Arabian species is under the ban to a degree almost unimaginable, is confirmed by the statement of the Dutch scholar, Hurgronje, who says in regard to the position of Arabian women: "Moslem literature, it is true, exhibits isolated glimpses of a worthier estimation of woman, but the later view which comes more and more into prevalence is the only one which finds expression in sacred traditions, which represents hell as full of women, and refuses to acknowledge in the woman, apart from rare exceptions, either reason or religion; in poems, which refer all the evil in the world to the woman as its root; in proverbs, which represent a careful education of girls as mere wastefulness. Ultimately, therefore, there is only conceded to the women the fascinating charm with which Allah has endowed her, in order to afford the man now and then in his earthly existence the prelibation of paradise, and to bear him children."

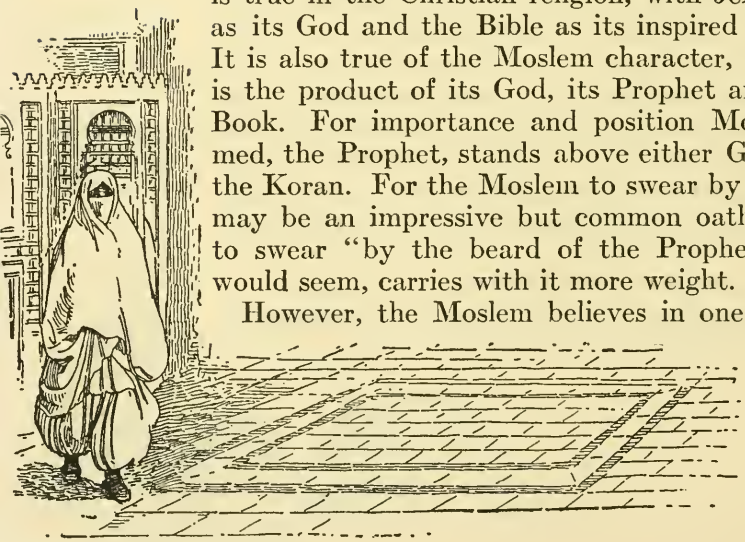


WHERE THE CRESCENT GLEAMS

Obviously no comprehensive consideration of the religion met with by missionaries in

North Africa — the religion of the Arab and the Berber, Mohammedanism — can here be given. It is practically North Africa's one religion. The libraries of the world bulge with books on the subject, and more volumes on it will undoubtedly be written. Theories have been woven and will be woven as to how such influence and power as were Mohammed's could spread, until a hundred years after his birth "his name joined to that of the Almighty was called out from ten thousand mosques five times daily from Muscat to Morocco, and his new religion was sweeping everything before it in three continents."

If among any people, or by one individual, belief in a deity is held, and the doctrines of a sacred book, for the establishment of moral order, adhered to, the character of such will be the outgrowth of the sum of the two. This is true in the Christian religion, with Jehovah as its God and the Bible as its inspired book. It is also true of the Moslem character, which is the product of its God, its Prophet and its Book. For importance and position Mohammed, the Prophet, stands above either God or the Koran. For the Moslem to swear by Allah may be an impressive but common oath, but to swear "by the beard of the Prophet," it would seem, carries with it more weight.

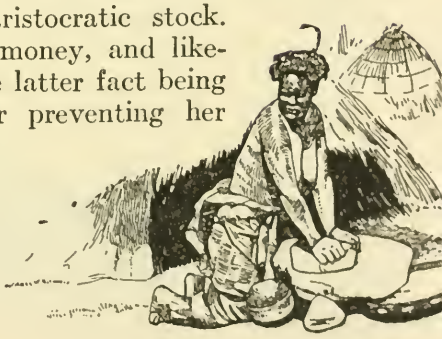


However, the Moslem believes in one God,

with all the passion of his passionate soul. It is said that even an Arab child will resent with anger any reference made by a missionary to Jesus Christ which would interfere with his belief in this doctrine. But the Moslem's God is far off from the God of the Christian who is taught at his mother's knee that God is a loving Heavenly Father, brooding over him with ever-increasing tenderness — for "God is love." Monotheism is clutched to the breast of the Moslem with the fierceness of fanaticism, yet the attribute of love, which is the very essence of God, is beyond his ken. The chief elements in the character of this "one God" as seen by the Moslem are those of a merciless, ruthless, omnipotent tyrant, who has had little interest in the world or the dwellers therein since he created them. One writer calls Allah, the God of Islam, "an absentee landlord who, jealous of man, wound the clock of the universe and went away forever."

THE PROPHET OF MECCA

In the year 570, A.D., Mohammed was born in Mecca, the Holy City of the Moslem world. He was not a mere camel driver as some have asserted, but came from aristocratic stock. He married a woman with money, and likewise with a strong mind, the latter fact being proved convincingly by her preventing her



young spouse — some years her junior — from taking another wife during her lifetime. This Arabian lady, Khadijah, was the first believer in the new faith promulgated by her husband, and her conversion was followed by that of his two adopted children, and then his closest friend. Evidently Mohammed's missionary operations began at home, but a world compassed by belief in his doctrines proves that they did not end there.

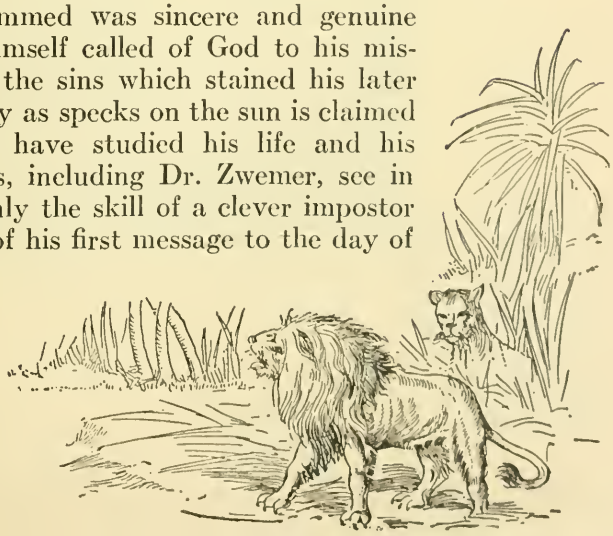
Authorities agree that no conclusive estimation of the character of the prophet of Arabia can be formed without some knowledge of his associations with women. Yet so revolting are the evidences of brutality and obscenity connected with such revelations, that scholars are loath to lift the veil which obscures them. One writer affirms that "there are depths of filth in the Prophet's character which may assort well enough with the depraved sensuality of the bulk of his followers, but which are simply loathsome in the eyes of all over whom Christianity in any measure or degree has influence."

He is accused of breaking repeatedly every commandment in the decalogue. He never approached in life or teaching the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount. He not only ignored the old laws of his own land, but he did not even keep those made by himself and for the revelation of which he contended he was

appointed by God. Witness the instance of his taking ten wives, and negotiating for thirty more after the death of Khadijah, while previous to that time and by his own decree the faithful were limited to four!

Two hundred and one names are given to him by his followers, among them being "Light of God," "Peace of the World," "Glory of the Ages," etc. Yet the bearer of these exalted names almost to the day of his death was not only corrupt in heart and life but was planning and executing horrible deeds of bloody conquest. His name is by all odds the favorite one for Moslem boys. "Mohammeds" of today are numerous. This name is never uttered without a prayer, and, it is avowed, is written upon the throne of God, where in the glories of Heaven he has usurped the place of the Son of God himself. And the Moslem believes that he approaches perfection only as he becomes like Mohammed!

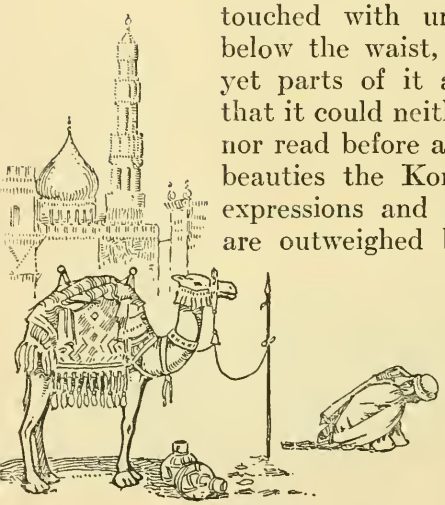
That Mohammed was sincere and genuine in believing himself called of God to his mission and that the sins which stained his later years were only as specks on the sun is claimed by some who have studied his life and his course. Others, including Dr. Zwemer, see in Mohammed only the skill of a clever impostor from the day of his first message to the day of his death.



Yet today Mohammed's following is as wide as the world, and before his name there bow in allegiance possibly 250,000,000 of the people of the earth, while the religion which he founded still proceeds upon its victorious way.

ISLAM'S BIBLE

In fierce devotion the Moslem clasps to his heart his holy book, the Koran, which Mohammed affirmed was given him of God. The book is small, less in size than our own New Testament. Even the pious Moslem is unable to read it without a commentary, because of its "jumbled" character. Every sort of fact and fancy, law and legend, is thrown together piecemeal. It is written in the Prophet's own tongue, the Arabic, which multitudes of his followers can neither read nor understand. Miraculous qualities are ascribed to the mere volume itself, the Prophet teaching that if it were wrapped in a skin and thrown into the fire, it would not burn. It must never be touched with unwashed hands, nor carried below the waist, never laid upon the floor — yet parts of it are so obscene and indecent that it could neither be translated into English nor read before a Christian audience. Poetical beauties the Koran may contain, and noble expressions and lofty descriptions, but these are outweighed by the glaring falsity of its



Class of Kabyle Girls in the Native Town, Algiers

teaching, and its absurd defects. It has been responsible for unmeasured misery through all the years in its upholding of polygamy, slavery, religious intolerance and the seclusion and infinite degradation of women, and the end of such suffering as its teaching, virile even now, engenders is not yet.

But of all its errors, its crowning one is its obliviousness to sin; and its greatest failure, that of not recognizing the necessity of reconciliation of the soul, through Jesus Christ, with a just but loving God.

Most inadequately have these brief and necessarily fragmentary paragraphs set forth the greatness, the need and the opportunity in Methodism's northern section of its African field. Not a topic has been touched upon but could be almost indefinitely elaborated. What is here set down concerning the country and the people with their religion is only a background for the study of the work of our missionaries in this field.

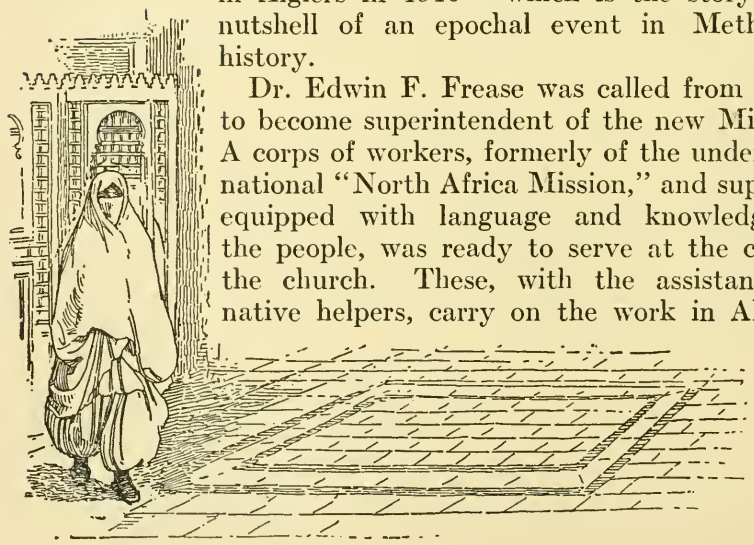
METHODISM AND MOHAMMEDANISM

Previous to 1910, when our work in North Africa was organized, that great and important field stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to Egypt was entirely unoccupied by any of the larger denominational bodies. Bounded on the north by 2500 miles of the Barbary

Coast line, and southward to the very heart of the continent itself, there was included a region for whose Moslem millions no organized work of evangelization had ever been attempted.

This door of opportunity for Methodist effort among North African Moslems swung on its hinges in 1907, previous to the World's Sunday School Convention. At that time, largely through the efforts of Bishop Hartzell, arrangements were made whereby delegates on their way to Rome might, by stopping at Algiers, catch a glimpse of this vast and neglected field of North Africa, with its twenty millions of Moslems. Mrs. Hartzell after studying for two months the situation in Algiers was, with the bishop, convinced that this must be in the coming years the center of a great work.

The Mission in North Africa was organized in Algiers in 1910 — which is the story in a nutshell of an epochal event in Methodist history.



Dr. Edwin F. Frease was called from India to become superintendent of the new Mission. A corps of workers, formerly of the undenominational "North Africa Mission," and superbly equipped with language and knowledge of the people, was ready to serve at the call of the church. These, with the assistance of native helpers, carry on the work in Algiers,

Constantine, Tunis, Fort National, Oran, and other points.

Evangelistic work among Arabs and Berbers, homes for both Moslem boys and girls, work for women, Moslem and French, Scripture translation, and some industrial instruction, make up the general outline of our missionary activities.

CHAPTER II

The Land and the Kraal

THE proportions of the missionary claim staked out for the Methodist Episcopal Church in Africa, approached too abruptly, are almost overwhelming. According to Bishop Hartzell, our six fields represent a combined population of over 30,000,000 people, and lest some fear that Methodism's measure is not quite full, the good bishop naïvely remarks that this number will doubtless double every fifty years!

Viewed in the light of our obligation our great church has scarcely made a perceptible move toward her goal. Millions of souls for whose salvation she alone is responsible are waiting for her to overtake them, but they wait in vain — and night for them draws near.

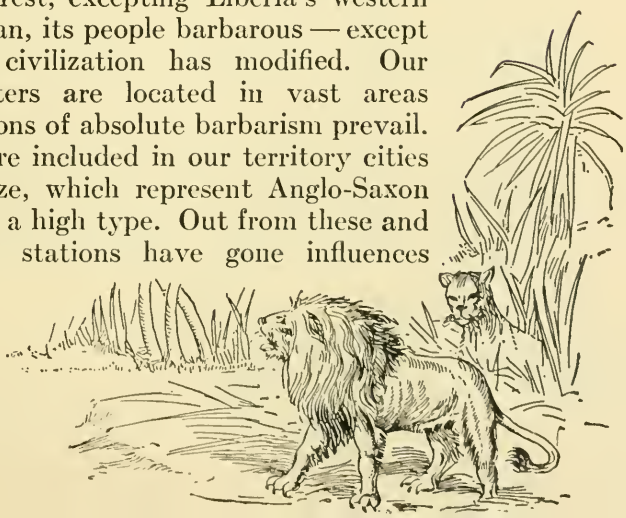
THE FIELD AFAR

Outside of North Africa, Methodist missions are entirely among the people of the great black population of the continent, who vastly outnumber the whites. This population is made up of diverse races and peoples of all shades of complexion. For example, the Fula people found in West and Central Africa

are said by Sir Harry Johnston to have hair which is neither curly nor straight, and skin no darker than a gypsy's or a Spaniard's.

If it should be affirmed that Africa is the dumping ground for all the languages in the universe that could not be used elsewhere, no one would deny it. There are eight hundred of them, including dialects. The larger part of them are without written form. This makes the work of the missionary most difficult. It also reflects great credit upon him, because he has found his way out by supplying them with alphabetic characters, recording and translating them. One language will be spoken by a group of villages, and in the next group one entirely different will be used. This is the universal situation. Along the West Coast there is no tongue sufficiently common to be used as a medium of communication for trade purposes, as Arabic is employed in the north.

Methodism's North African field is Mohammedan. The rest, excepting Liberia's western border, is pagan, its people barbarous — except where white civilization has modified. Our strategic centers are located in vast areas where conditions of absolute barbarism prevail. True, there are included in our territory cities of varying size, which represent Anglo-Saxon civilization of a high type. Out from these and from mission stations have gone influences



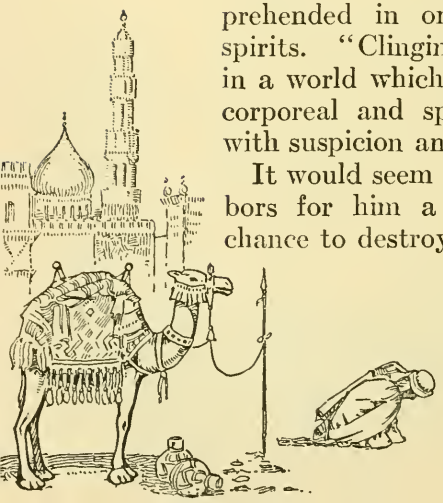
which make for the uplift of the blacks. Wise governments are looking to their improvement. But aside from these, Bishop Hartzell declares, and taking the vast area as a whole, the heathen masses are yet without the gospel.

PRIMITIVE PAGANISM

Mohammedanism may be defined and described because it is a religious system, with a God and a Book. Paganism has neither a God nor a Book. In every known tribe there is said to be a belief which crudely approaches a hazy conception of some great and supreme Being. This God is not a deity with the attribute of love, but some power who created the world long, long ago and then went away forever. Miss MacAllister found evidences of such a belief in Liberia, where the native name for God was "Niswa." Doubtless, however, there are as many names for him as there are languages.

Briefly, the religion of pagan Africa is comprehended in one thing — the fear of evil spirits. "Clinging desperately for dear life in a world which he fancies is full of enemies, corporeal and spiritual, he is daily tortured with suspicion and superstitious fear."

It would seem that every visible object harbors for him a malignant spirit, waiting a chance to destroy. Worship consists of placat-



ing these for fancied offences, or securing their favor by offerings. The offerings usually made are practically worthless and apparently foolish. Bishop Camphor speaks of seeing a man carry a half cup of rice and carefully deposit it as a sacrificial offering at the foot of a cottonwood tree forty-five feet in circumference.

Quite different was the attitude of a little girl from the mission school who was taken to her home village for a visit. The spirit worshipped by the family was housed in a hideous wooden idol and kept in a small thatched room. At meal time each member of the family threw into this room a handful of food as an offering, and the mission child was ordered to do likewise. At first she refused to obey. Later, when threatened with punishment by having pepper rubbed into her eyes, ears, nose and mouth, she consented. She afterward explained her apparent apostasy to her teacher by saying: "I know that piece of wood cannot eat, but the ants and chickens had a good feast, and the dogs that strayed that way." A striking example this that even in benighted Africa, enlightenment learned through love "casteth out fear."

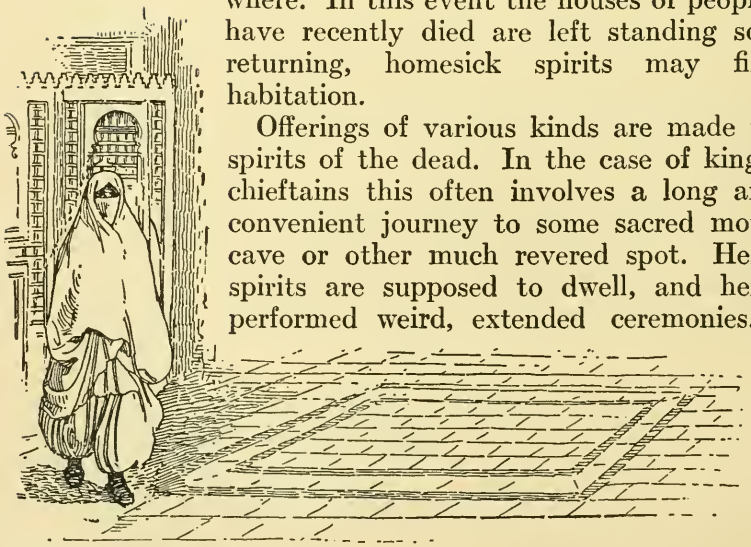
This harrowing, torturing belief of the African in evil spirits extends in a thousand directions. It influences his unconscious as well as his conscious doings, for his own spirit

in its wanderings through dreams may be bewitching members of his family or his tribe, quite unknown to himself! For this offense, if it becomes known, he will be held to strict accountability.

He dreads the spirits of the earth, the sea and the air. He fears a dead enemy a thousand times more than one who lives. He can with some effort protect himself against the latter, but nothing short of a lifetime will suffice to keep clear of the former.

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

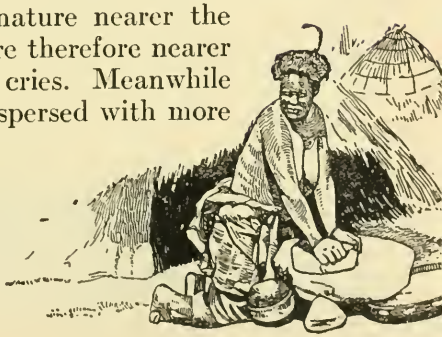
In his belief the spirits of the dead return. They come back to linger among the scenes and about the dwellings of their earthly days. Not infrequently, when accumulated filth makes a village uninhabitable even for a pagan community, it is burned, the tribe locating elsewhere. In this event the houses of people who have recently died are left standing so that returning, homesick spirits may find a habitation.



Offerings of various kinds are made to the spirits of the dead. In the case of kings and chieftains this often involves a long and inconvenient journey to some sacred mountain cave or other much revered spot. Here the spirits are supposed to dwell, and here are performed weird, extended ceremonies. One

such, observed by Bishop Camphor, he has described:

"Powerful and numerous fetishes are employed, and after a wearying scene of senseless mutterings and uncanny performances, the devil-doctors, standing erect with faces upturned to the top of the cave and speaking aloud in feeling tones, address the spirits as follows, one of their number holding the white fowl brought as an offering, and another a plate filled with rice placed near the mouth of the chicken: 'Spirits of our kings and chieftains, dwelling in the cave of this mountain, we now come to meet you this day. We have left our towns and farms behind, and have walked this long, rough way with our wives and our children. We bring you this peace offering and beg you in the name of our king to accept it, letting us know the state of your mind by making this fowl peck the rice we place before it.' The time drags wearily on for three hours with no response. Then there are feverish stirs and mutterings followed by loud, pathetic, importunate cries, pleading with the spirits to answer. Women whom the witch-doctors pressed down in the dark recesses, claiming that they are by nature nearer the underworld than men, and are therefore nearer the spirits, are loud in their cries. Meanwhile there was long waiting, interspersed with more

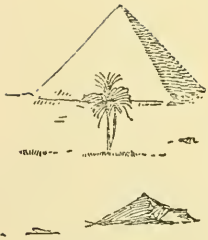


violent incantations by the witch-doctors, mad self-inflicted flagellations by the people, and the pleadings of the old king. When the fowl finally attacked the rice, the excitement of the crowd was beyond description. It seemed as though the cave would explode under the pressure of the wild and furious yells in which all indulged."

Such is prayer and such is worship in this land of midnight. Bible students will recognize at once the similarity between these pagan incantations and those of the prophets of Baal at Elijah's test on Mt. Carmel when they cut themselves after their manner and cried aloud unto their god till the going down of the sun.

BELIEF IN REINCARNATION

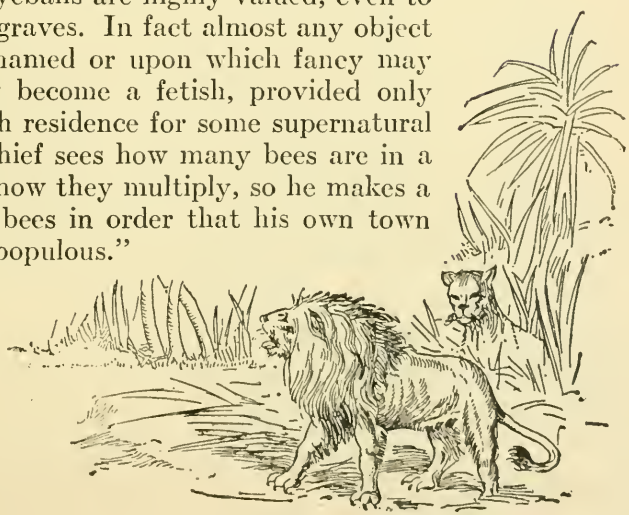
A rude sort of conception of reincarnation of the dead is held. Miss MacAllister found this belief prevalent in Liberia, where to prevent the return of undesirable spirits they were insulted at the burial. A mother of three children, all of whom died, became the mother of twins who also died. Under the instructions of the devil-doctor, it was believed that the same spirit had thus been returning time after time. The twins were roughly buried in one grave and several shots fired into it to prevent the spirit's return. A child undesirable because ailing from its birth lived but a few months.



At its death it was wrapped in a coarse mat of reeds, heavy stones were rolled upon the tiny body and its spirit was told never to return.

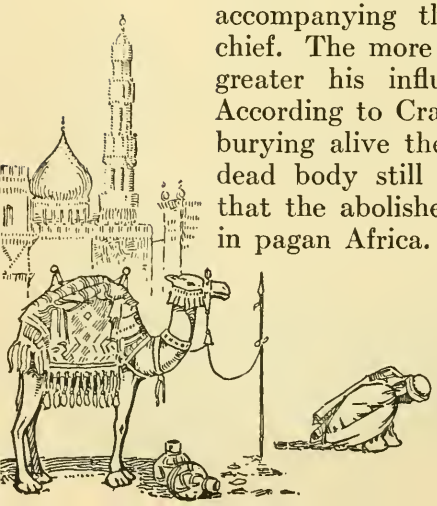
With such infernal forces bent upon his ruin it is small wonder that self-preservation is the first law of the pagan black man. Obviously, then, he must find some friendly shelter which will assist him in giving them the go-by, thus saving his own skin and, figuratively speaking, that also of his family and estate.

This defense he finds in the possession of various amulets and charms, called fetishes. They are not worshipped but are worn or displayed, in order to induce spirit protection. In these he believes they take up their abode. It seems that there is some discrimination in taste on the part of the spirits themselves. To make a charm effective, great care must be exercised by the devotee to select the particular object most pleasing. The teeth of lions and leopards are much coveted for this purpose, and human eyeballs are highly valued, even to the rifling of graves. In fact almost any object that can be named or upon which fancy may be fixed may become a fetish, provided only it may furnish residence for some supernatural power. "A chief sees how many bees are in a bee tree and how they multiply, so he makes a fetish to the bees in order that his own town may become populous."



In St. Paul's day there were those who got to themselves great gain by the making of idols. There are, generally speaking, few real idols worshipped in Africa, so the market in them is not flourishing. The idol maker's job, however, has been taken over by the fetish-doctor who is quite as sleek a rascal as his ancient trade predecessors at Ephesus. For a consideration as sizable as can be wrung from the trembling victim of frightsome fears, a fetish is furnished. If it fails to accomplish what has been guaranteed, or goes bad after use, back to the doctor it is taken, to be tinkered up a bit, or at an advanced figure a new one is provided.

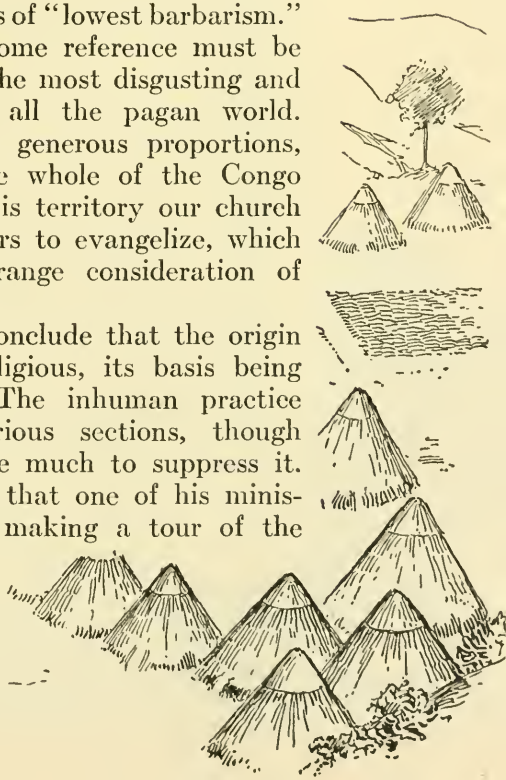
In a very literal fashion does the African believe in "Deadland." Have people not always died? In his thought that land, like his own, is full of strivings, ambitions, loves and hatreds. There as here, according to him, the majority will rule. This accounts for the human sacrifices formerly and doubtless even now accompanying the funeral rites of king or chief. The more adherents sent with him the greater his influence in that other world. According to Crawford the horrible custom of burying alive the wives of the chief with his dead body still exists. Thus would it seem that the abolished suttee of India is outdone in pagan Africa.



The African knows of no resurrection from the dead, but he has legends relating to the end of the world. In the early days of the Liberian mission the school children said: "The sea gull tries to drink all the water in the sea, the sandpiper to count every grain of sand upon the shore, the woodpecker to chop down every tree. When they finish their tasks all at the same time then the sky will fall."

CANNIBALISM AND WITCHCRAFT

Bishop Hartzell assures us that we are safe in describing, as relevant to our African field, the practice and customs of "lowest barbarism." This being the case, some reference must be made to cannibalism, the most disgusting and abhorrent practice in all the pagan world. The cannibal zone, of generous proportions, includes practically the whole of the Congo basin. A portion of this territory our church has appropriated as hers to evangelize, which makes fitting a long-range consideration of the subject.



Careful authorities conclude that the origin of cannibalism was religious, its basis being the sacrificial feast. The inhuman practice still flourishes in various sections, though governments have done much to suppress it. Bishop Hartzell states that one of his ministers in Liberia, while making a tour of the

interior, told him of seeing two black men tied out in the bush near a native town. They had been captured in war and were waiting their turn to be eaten.

Belief in witchcraft is universal. Nowhere in the world is the witch-spirit population so dense. Its members are not limited to nocturnal flights through the air on broomsticks. In the belief of the African they are actively and diabolically omnipresent, ready at any moment to pounce upon him. Events of whatever nature are never explained by natural causes. The word "accident" is not to be found in African parlance. Everything is caused by spirit influence, and that, always malignant.

Persons thought to have undue familiarity with the spirits of the dead are believed capable of exercising malign and destructive powers. To such are attributed the origin of misfortune, disease and death. The jurisprudence of native Africa consists largely in "smelling out" the witch. This gives rise to various ordeals by which such persons are discovered, chief among them being that of the sasswood, or the poison-cup.

Martha Drummer, who as an evangelistic missionary of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in Angola has frequently encountered the sasswood test, calls it the "Supreme Court" of Africa. So long has the custom

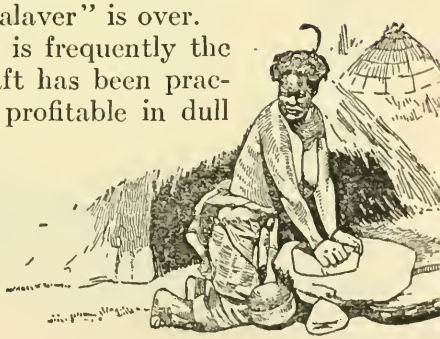
been in vogue that its hold upon the people is very strong. Even the converted native finds it difficult to break off from his belief in it.

The sasswood tree, which is the basis of the poison potion, is considered sacred. In its bark inheres the influence capable of correctly and unerringly locating the person accused of witchcraft. The bark is ground and steeped in water, the people are called together, and the "witch palaver" begins. The invitation to attend is never refused as that would be to acknowledge one's self guilty — so the whole village turns out.

The devil-doctor is master of ceremonies. In hideous guise, with unearthly howls and often frothing at the mouth, he tears wildly about among the terrified crowd. According to prearrangement, or chance, he "smells out" his victim, professing that the odor of blood draws him thither.

The sasswood potion is drained by the accused. If innocent he survives the ordeal. If guilty his death from the poison proves past argument that sure justice was meted out to him. The body is burned, the witch-doctor takes his fee from the confiscated property of the victim, and the "witch palaver" is over.

"The witch-doctor himself is frequently the one to suggest that witchcraft has been practiced. Such a proceeding is profitable in dull

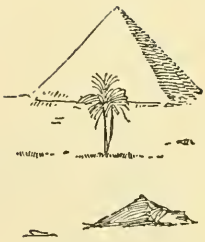


times. The truth is that owing to the widespread belief in their infallibility, witch trials have long since become a gigantic system of blackmail." It is estimated that annually four millions of people in Africa come to their end in the effort to locate witches. This number probably exceeds that of deaths caused in the same length of time by war and disease combined.

THE SIMPLE LIFE

The simple life finds full expression in native African existence. To provide food the black man need scarcely scratch the fertile ground to grow a crop. Mary Slessor of Calabar had to keep constantly fighting back the tropical bush around her mission house to prevent its being veritably swallowed up. The African has been likened to Nature's spoiled child whom she feeds almost without the asking.

His hut is a matter of small account, being but a combination of a few poles, some mud plaster and a roof of thatch. The breaking and cleaning of windows does not bother him, for he has none. His door, which serves for both, is so low he must stoop to enter. The pounded earth is quite good enough for a floor, and the furniture is limited in quantity and simple in design. Sometimes it is but a mat of reeds upon which to lie, or there may be a bed of bamboo or mud. A few bamboo stools, a few

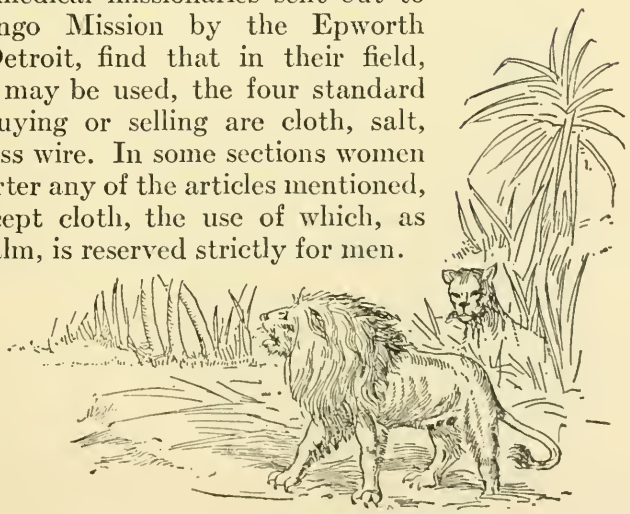


blocks of wood for pillows and the furnishings, aside from cooking utensils, are complete.

Clothing likewise concerns him but slightly, being Mother Nature's ready-to-wear gift, which may be added to according to the prosperity or state of civilization of the wearer.

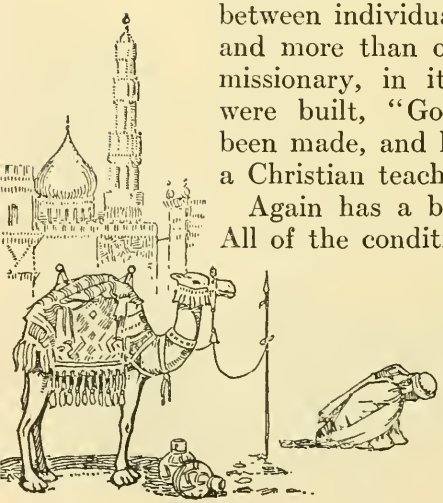
The Governor-General of North Africa, being asked by Alexander Powell what he considered the most important factors in the remarkable spread of French influence there replied, "Public schools, the American phonograph and the American sewing machine." Evidently the benign ministrations of the latter have not been limited to North Africa, as the eminent traveler declares he has also seen one stitching the garments of a tribal chieftain in Central Africa. Thus it is that civilization sews its way in.

Anything which the native chooses may be utilized for money. Cloth is a prime favorite everywhere. Dr. A. L. Piper and Mrs. Piper, who are the medical missionaries sent out to the new Congo Mission by the Epworth Leagues of Detroit, find that in their field, whatever else may be used, the four standard articles for buying or selling are cloth, salt, beads and brass wire. In some sections women may use in barter any of the articles mentioned, or others, except cloth, the use of which, as coin of the realm, is reserved strictly for men.



Kraals are simply native villages, built probably for the sake of safety and sociability around an open space of more or less ample proportions. Community matters are presided over by kings, chiefs or head men, varying in degrees of importance.

Whatever else may be lacking in a village, large or small, that thing will not be the palaver-house. This building amounts to a community center, and is by all odds of paramount importance. Ordinarily there is a large pole in the center, thirty or forty feet high, and the conical-shaped roof is thatched. Of hard-beaten clay the floor is somewhat higher than the surface of the ground. For seating purposes an embankment possibly two feet high encircles the outer rim. It is here that community affairs are thoroughly aired, discussed and settled in long and exhaustive sessions called palavers. Here, in state, strangers are met by the head men. Here the ordeals by sasswood, smoke, and oil are sometimes administered. Disputes between individuals or tribes are here argued, and more than once since the coming of the missionary, in it, before church and school were built, "God palaver" (preaching) has been made, and little children gathered about a Christian teacher.

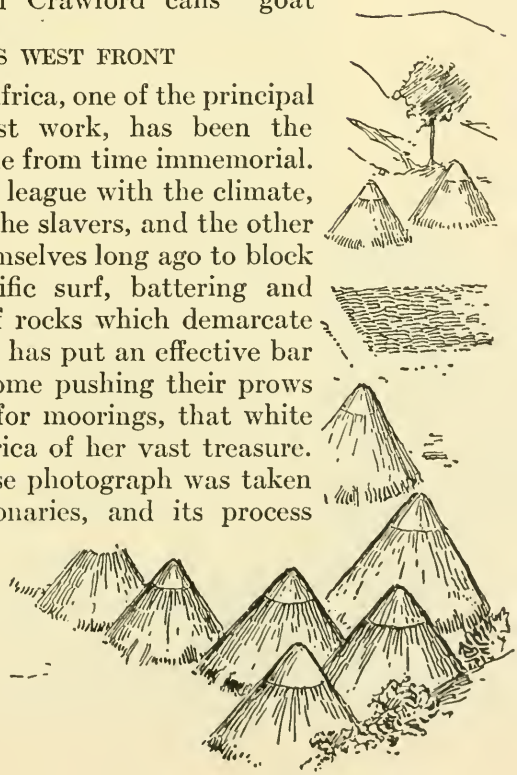


Again has a background been sketched in. All of the conditions here referred to actually

apply over the territory where Methodist missionaries are today at work. To reach their various fields, and upon their itineraries, every sort of a contrivance for locomotion is utilized. Bishop Hartzell, who not once but many times has covered our African ground, says that travel by water has varied from the greatest ocean liners to native canoes, and on land from the finest railroad trains to hammocks swung on the shoulders of natives, or to ox-back or going on foot. Our women missionaries have not disdained the aid of donkeys, and a bicycle with mule-like tendencies has been tried over the roads which Dan Crawford calls "goat walks."

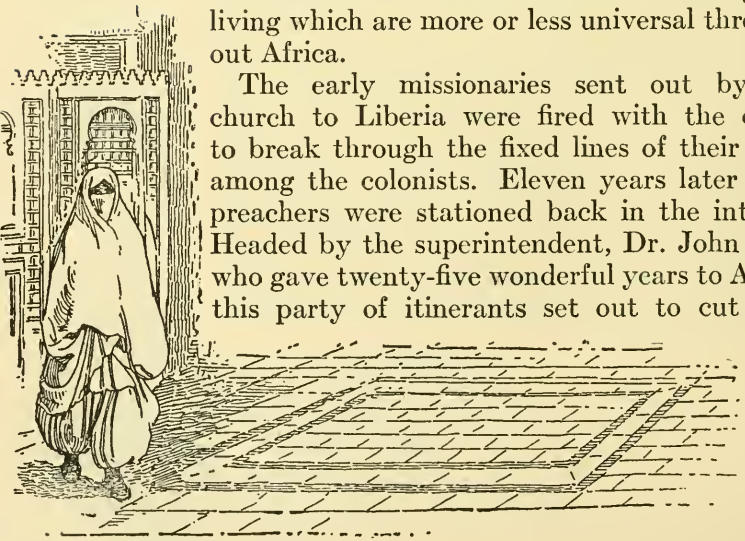
METHODISM'S WEST FRONT

The West Coast of Africa, one of the principal locations of Methodist work, has been the possessor of a bad name from time immemorial. The ocean has been in league with the climate, and the diseases, and the slavers, and the other agencies which set themselves long ago to block its portals. The terrific surf, battering and booming upon reefs of rocks which demarcate the entire West Coast, has put an effective bar to ships that would come pushing their prows toward shore to nose for moorings, that white men might despoil Africa of her vast treasure. An African chief, whose photograph was taken by one of our missionaries, and its process



explained to him, enthusiastically exclaimed, "White man he know everything for true. He all the same as God." Not very God-like were those who for generations rifled Africa's coasts. They carried away her children, her ivory and her gold, but they demonstrated that the genius of the white man could raze to the ground even such colossal defenses as were hers.

Liberia is Methodism's oldest African mission. The establishment of the colony was an American experiment. Something of its early history has been suggested elsewhere in this volume, showing that Methodism and the new Free State on the West Coast were contemporaneous. Real Liberians are descended from the first colonists and speak the English language, which is the national language of the Black Republic. The aborigines of the country are heathen with the customs and ways of living which are more or less universal throughout Africa.

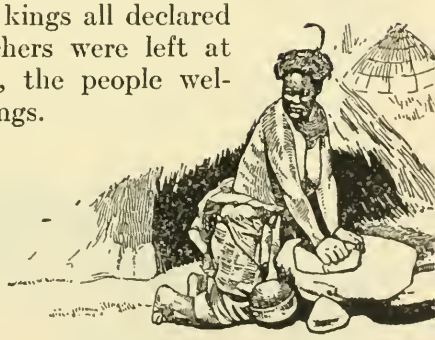


The early missionaries sent out by our church to Liberia were fired with the desire to break through the fixed lines of their work among the colonists. Eleven years later three preachers were stationed back in the interior. Headed by the superintendent, Dr. John Seys, who gave twenty-five wonderful years to Africa, this party of itinerants set out to cut their

way into the hinterland, presumably to hunt for their stations!

The upland country as they described it was delightful, being much more desirable than the flat and miasmatic beach land. Dr. Seys wrote while upon the journey: "The country is increasingly undulating, with little streams of cool and delightful water, a luxury of incalculable value to weary foot-travelers on a hot day in Africa." Again, "This is a hilly, well-timbered country with as good water as I ever drank. There are hills very high and the streams are broad." Then there were "unbroken forests" and paths that were "zigzag and circuitous," and others overgrown by the wild luxuriance of the tropics.

In many of the kraals visited by this party of intrepid Christian pioneers, no white man had ever before been seen. The people were kind and curious. The kings and head men cordially welcomed them. King Guzzama, 150 miles in the interior, called several other kings to a council in his village, to make palaver regarding the new religion which had been brought by the white men. After the usual time, doubtless, which is required for coming to conclusions in Africa, the kings all declared for Christianity. The preachers were left at the most promising villages, the people welcoming them with loud rejoicings.



The work in the interior of Liberia was not continued owing to lack of men and means and, much to be regretted, has never been resumed. In his quadrennial report to the General Conference of 1916, S. Earl Taylor, corresponding secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, stated: "The hinterland of Liberia opens up a door of unusual opportunity for missionary service to the pagan races of Africa. It has a superior climate and a higher type of native than the coast land. Mohammedanism is breaking over Liberia's frontiers. Already one native tribe has been Islamized. The door to the hinterland should be opened at once."

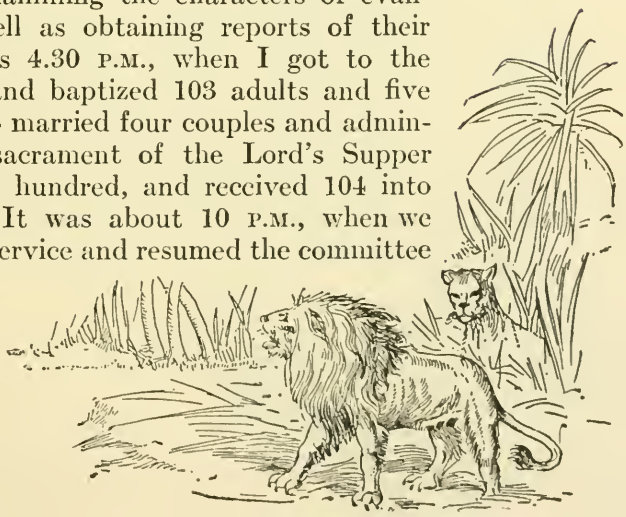
THE IMPACT OF METHODISM

The character of the work of our church under the Board of Foreign Missions in the exclusively pagan centers — Angola, Belgian Congo, Rhodesia and Portuguese East Africa — is similar. Strong centers are surrounded by outstations, the latter manned in most instances by native pastor-teachers. Church services are held in all of these, while the missionaries, and in many instances the young men and women students, push out into distinctive heathen kraals to preach and sing. One missionary living near a large kraal visits it every Sunday afternoon, holding from ten to a dozen services in different parts of it every time.

Heathen customs are hard to break away from and before the rite of baptism is administered the candidates are carefully examined in the villages where they live, the occasion being made much of by the people, both Christian and heathen. The questions asked cover the situation regarding their break with heathen customs, practice and beliefs, the home life and married relation, and the use of tobacco and beer.

The candidate must also give satisfactory evidence of his conversion; his knowledge of God's laws and those of the church; his willingness to follow the teachings of the church and make contributions toward the work of Christianizing his own people. All this, as may be imagined, takes time. A leaf from the journal of a ditsrict superintendent describing one such examination reads:

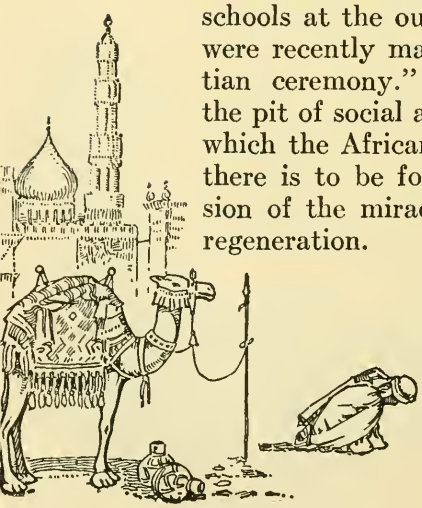
"A great day. We continued the examination of candidates until about noon and then spent some time examining the characters of evangelists, as well as obtaining reports of their work. It was 4.30 P.M., when I got to the sacraments, and baptized 103 adults and five infants. Also married four couples and administered the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to about two hundred, and received 104 into the church. It was about 10 P.M., when we finished this service and resumed the committee



examination of workers. So much remained to be done that it was three o'clock Monday morning when I retired."

The change wrought by Christianity in the character of the native African is well nigh unbelievable. It makes him over and in a very real way he becomes a new man in Christ Jesus. The testimony of the missionary upon this point is clear and unmistakable: "They give up their heathen charms, ornaments and rings, and they stop painting and marking their bodies. They use soap and clean up; they wear more clothes; they buy tables and chairs and serve their food on plates and dishes." They show signs of affection for family and home. They stop attending heathen dances, but instead they congregate in services for worship and sing religious songs.

"As Christianity spreads among the natives, so does the desire for learning. Impelled by the desire to learn and to read the New Testament, and to write, large numbers attend the schools at the outstations. Thirty-one couples were recently married according to the Christian ceremony." Considering the depths of the pit of social and religious degradation from which the African Christian convert is digged, there is to be found no more striking expression of the miracle of grace, than that of his regeneration.

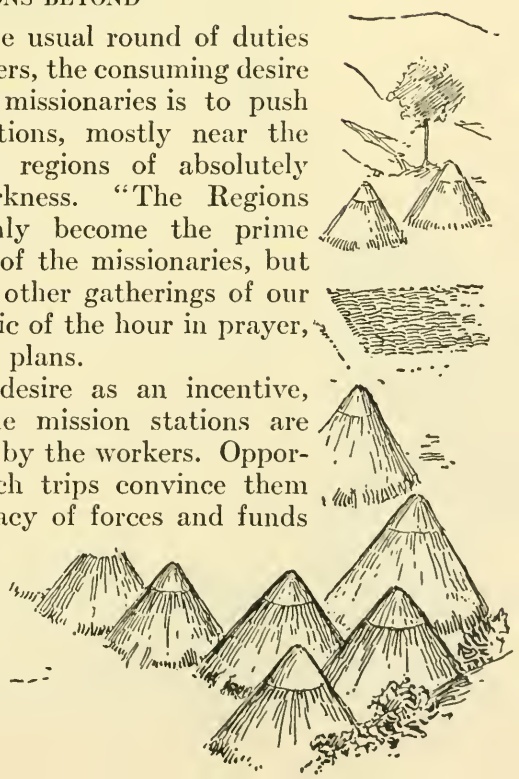


Suffering among the people, caused by the ravages of strong drink combined with disease, is widespread and pitiful in the extreme. The results of bad living before conversion attend even the Christian, and are the heritage of his children. Diseases such as itch, chicken-pox, pneumonia, diseased eyes, and the ever-increasing tuberculosis, are common and make the medical missionary indeed a Godsend. A much larger number of medical missionaries are needed, although there is some medical work being done at all our mission centers.

THE REGIONS BEYOND

Not content with the usual round of duties in well-established centers, the consuming desire in the hearts of our missionaries is to push out beyond their stations, mostly near the coasts, into the vast regions of absolutely unrelieved pagan darkness. "The Regions Beyond" has not only become the prime objective in the mind of the missionaries, but in all conferences and other gatherings of our field forces it is *the* topic of the hour in prayer, in conversation, and in plans.

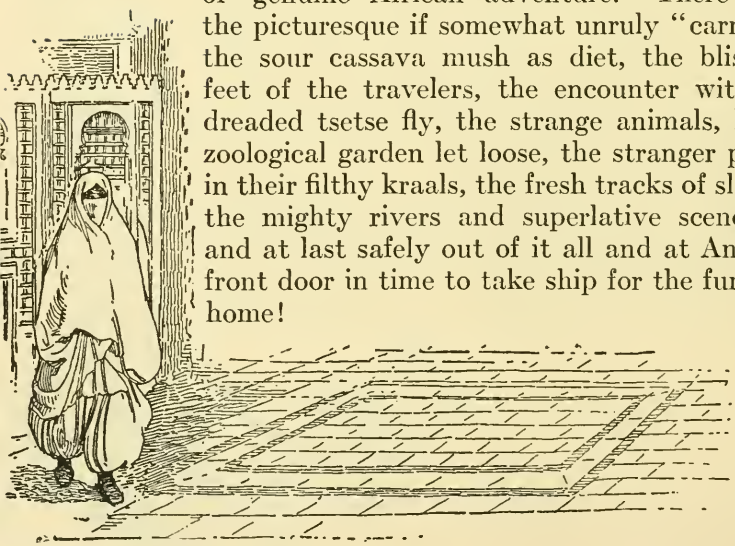
With this burning desire as an incentive, journeys out from the mission stations are constantly being made by the workers. Opportunities seen upon such trips convince them that only the inadequacy of forces and funds



prevents the church from indefinitely extending her influence upon the black-skinned folk who wait to welcome her.

With the thought of the extension in mind, a missionary trek of fifteen hundred miles was made in 1907 by Dr. and Mrs. John M. Springer. Dr. Springer was then the superintendent of the Old Umtali District in Rhodesia, which as he says bordered upon a region lying between Angola and East Africa, "unentered, untouched and unassigned." The history of this survey, with its events and experiences, made by two Methodist pioneers through the very land of Livingstone, as recorded in Dr. Springer's book, "The Heart of Central Africa," is fascinating and informing.

There were in the journey happenings which produced all the thrills pleasant or otherwise which are naturally to be expected in a story of genuine African adventure. There were the picturesque if somewhat unruly "carriers," the sour cassava mush as diet, the blistered feet of the travelers, the encounter with the dreaded tsetse fly, the strange animals, like a zoological garden let loose, the stranger people in their filthy kraals, the fresh tracks of slavers, the mighty rivers and superlative scenery — and at last safely out of it all and at Angola's front door in time to take ship for the furlough home!



In a reference to the territory covered by the Springers Bishop Hartzell says:

"This region for centuries was raided by slave traders, but now the tide is turned, and the descendants of former slaves are returning from the east and west. Among them are Christians, young men ready to begin the rebuilding of the country of their fathers on Christian principles. Mr. and Mrs. Springer established favorable relations with the government and native chiefs, and finally, in the name of our Methodism, they claimed for future occupancy territory four hundred miles square. Several points are now occupied; buildings are erected; a Biblical training school, a mission press and a book store are already begun. The Gospel by Luke has been put into the native language."

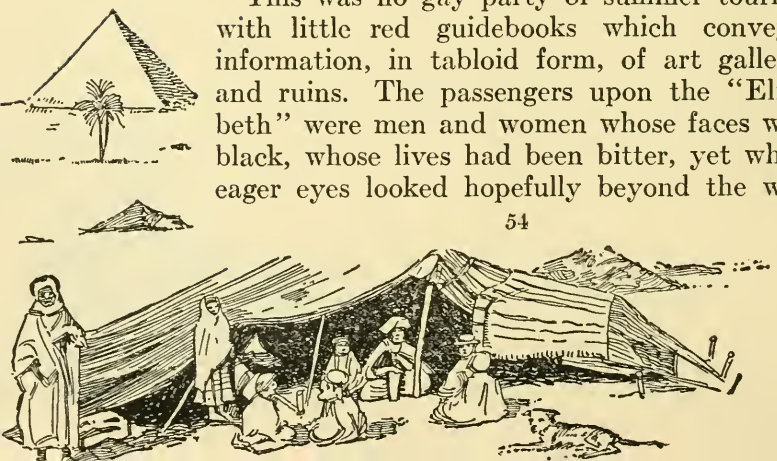
CHAPTER III

Come the Methodists

WITH the divine fitness of things which is often recognized by the devout and discerning mind in the orderings of Providence, it was a negro, ten days outbound from New York to Africa on the more or less good ship "Elizabeth," in the year 1820, who organized according to the approved rules of the American Church, the first Methodist Episcopal congregation for Africa, our first foreign mission. The man's name was Daniel Coker, and his after history proves that he so successfully met the tests for endurance and godly character in the new field, full of fears and fevers, that none who came after him could more appropriately have borne the title of Father of Methodism in Liberia.

AFRICAN PILGRIM FATHERS

This was no gay party of summer tourists, with little red guidebooks which conveyed information, in tabloid form, of art galleries and ruins. The passengers upon the "Elizabeth" were men and women whose faces were black, whose lives had been bitter, yet whose eager eyes looked hopefully beyond the wide

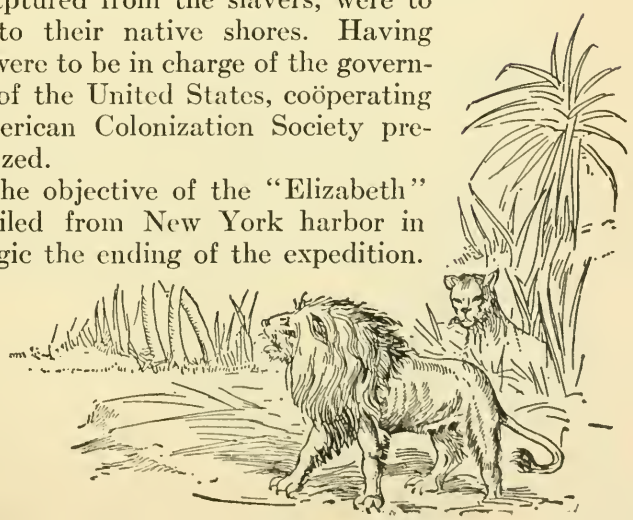


waste of Atlantic waters to Africa, the land of their fathers, and, free from the talons of the slave trader, soon to be their own. Except for a difference in direction, and shade of complexion, they suggest somewhat another "band of exiles" who, for the sake of home and freedom, voyaged across the same sea.

Back of all this was the dark, dreadful history of the slave trade on Africa's West Coast, where undreamed-of horrors seemed to emanate from hell itself. Would that even today the chapter in American history which records her part in that traffic in human flesh and blood might be expunged! But as early as 1819 the leaven which was eventually to leaven the whole lump of American public opinion regarding slavery had begun to work.

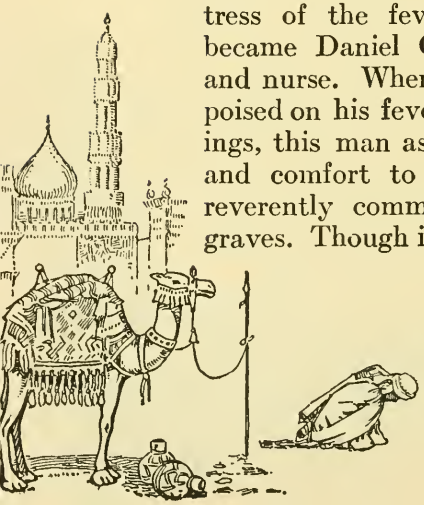
Indignant at the boldness of the abominable slavers the United States Congress, backed by President Monroe, who it seems had more than one "doctrine," passed an act by which all Africans, recaptured from the slavers, were to be restored to their native shores. Having arrived they were to be in charge of the government agents of the United States, coöperating with the American Colonization Society previously organized.

Such was the objective of the "Elizabeth" when she sailed from New York harbor in 1820, but tragic the ending of the expedition.



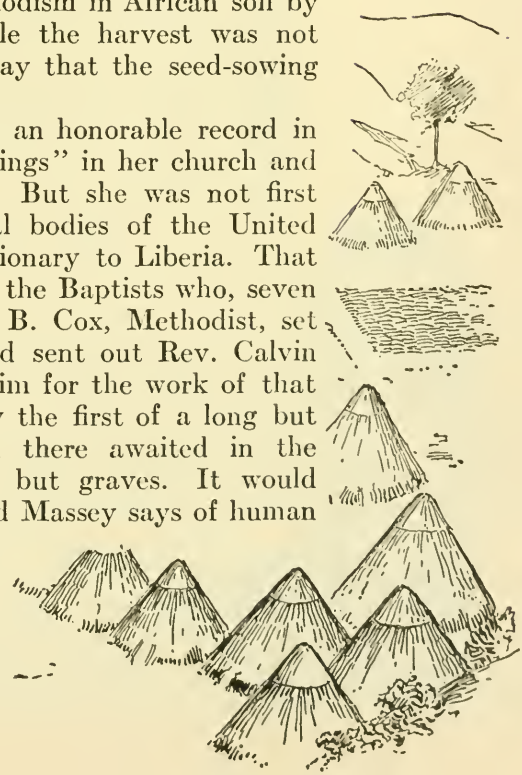
Except the embryo Methodist Episcopal Church, which developed in the course of the journey, but little of the colony survived after reaching the longed-for shores. The point selected for the site of the proposed colony proved entirely impossible. "African fever" has been spoken with bated breath by many in the course of years. And it was this deadly malady, the scourge of Africa's West Coast, which like an enemy unseen, silent but certain, came creeping up from the low and sickly soil, ruthlessly to slay. The wretched little colony was fever-swept, and soon deserted by the survivors — those who had crossed leagues of sea for freedom and home.

It was in these days, these frightful days of fever and terror and death, that Daniel Coker, the negro preacher, won his spurs. Sometime he was governor of the little colony. There was no doctor among them, except as this man assumed that role. Then Daniel Coker, the governor, the doctor, when the moaning distress of the fever-smitten souls was heard, became Daniel Coker, the governor, doctor, and nurse. When death, before smiting, hung poised on his fevered wings above lowly dwellings, this man as pastor spoke words of peace and comfort to souls in their passing, and reverently committed their bodies to lonely graves. Though in later years noble service was



rendered for God and the church in Africa by Daniel Coker, nothing stands out with more Christlike radiance than his devotion to the ill-fated colony at Sherbro. The surviving members of that first Methodist Episcopal Church in Africa, fleeing for their lives to Sierra Leone, at once raised crude buildings for churches, and among them Christian worship was for many years maintained.

So ended, not the first African adventure of the Methodist Episcopal Church as such, for the church neither stood sponsor for nor financially backed it. It was, however, the first planting of Methodism in African soil by Methodists, and while the harvest was not abundant who shall say that the seed-sowing was not worthy?



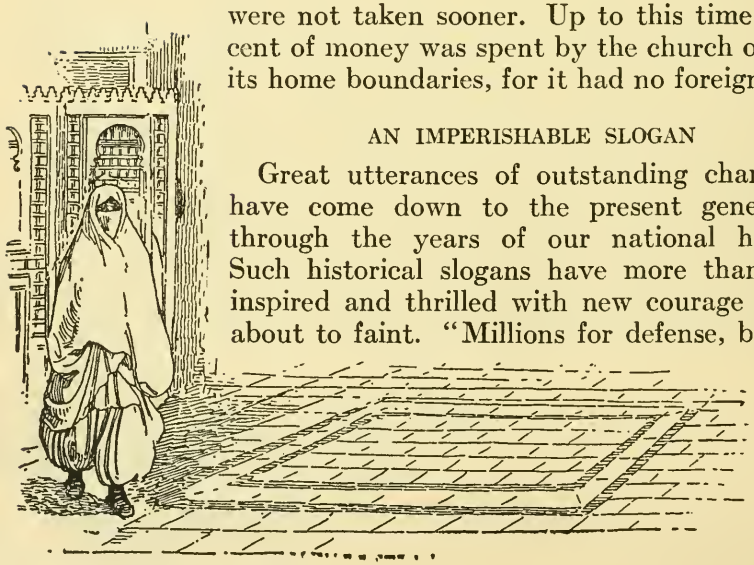
Methodism has had an honorable record in the doing of "first things" in her church and missionary activities. But she was not first of the denominational bodies of the United States to send a missionary to Liberia. That distinction belongs to the Baptists who, seven years before Melville B. Cox, Methodist, set sail from Norfolk, had sent out Rev. Calvin Holton to stake a claim for the work of that church. He was only the first of a long but noble line for whom there awaited in the African field nothing but graves. It would seem that what Gerald Massey says of human

progress in general is true also of African missions:

> "We climb like corals, grave on grave,
> We beat a pathway sunward."

The Methodist Episcopal Church, however, did arrive in Africa. Foreign missionary convictions, among Methodists in 1824, were of an exceedingly pale and flabby variety, but the General Conference of that year, moved possibly by the example of their Baptist brethren, took definite action. It authorized the bishops, as soon as sufficient funds were in hand and a man found willing to have his steamer ticket read "To Africa," to appoint a missionary there.

The sum total of Methodism's budget for all missionary purposes at that time being less than $7000 and, interest in foreign evangelization being practically nil, it is not a matter of surprise that definite measures for Africa were not taken sooner. Up to this time not a cent of money was spent by the church outside its home boundaries, for it had no foreign field.



AN IMPERISHABLE SLOGAN

Great utterances of outstanding characters have come down to the present generation through the years of our national history. Such historical slogans have more than once inspired and thrilled with new courage hearts about to faint. "Millions for defense, but not

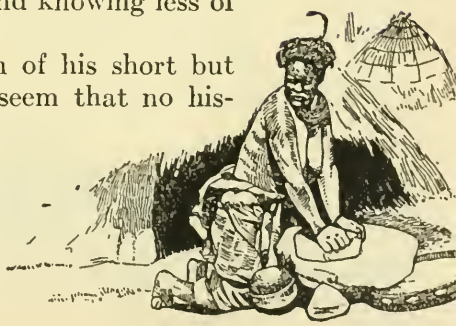
one cent for tribute," flung out in our national halls long ago against the pirate outrages on the Barbary Coast, had a big share in forever putting to an end the operations of those marauders.

"Let a thousand fall, before Africa be given up," were the burning words of a man with a soul aflame for the release of a race from spiritual bondage of the deepest dye. They are worthy to be recorded side by side with those expressing the loftiest sentiments which in all history have thrilled and stirred to action the souls of men. They were flung out as a challenge to the whole church of Jesus Christ, not to a mere denominational segment of it, by one who, by all the tokens, knew intuitively that he himself would be one of the thousand that should fall for Africa. The man was Melville B. Cox, Methodism's first foreign missionary to Africa, or any foreign country.

MELVILLE B. COX

Thousands of people in the church today there are — even of those who know something of missionary service — who many times have mouthed the words of Melville B. Cox, thinking little of their import, and knowing less of their author.

In view of what is known of his short but prodigious career, it would seem that no his-



torian need mention that he was made of stuff that was as stern as that of which his New England forbears were made. Had it been possible for him to attend a certain Boston Tea Party with a certain military ancestor, we run no risk in assuming that he would undoubtedly have been present.

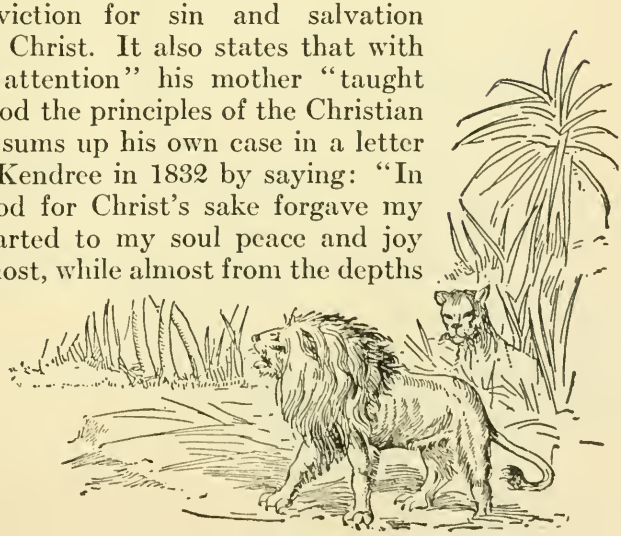
It was in Hallowell, Maine, on the ninth of November, 1799, that Melville B. Cox entered a family circle which had already welcomed six other little folks. His was not a pampered childhood, and there is no evidence recorded as to a gold spoon in his nursery — if he had a nursery. Families in straitened circumstances and with seven children do not order gold spoons in any considerable quantity.

The mother of the Coxes evidently classes with other great mothers — Susannah Wesley, and the rest. Her name was Martha, and like another Martha, she knew well what it was to "serve." Well educated for a girl of her day, Mrs. Cox looked to the religious as well as the intellectual development of her children. Her training, with public school instruction until he was ten, ended real school life for Melville Cox. His mother's influence was perhaps the strongest human force in his life, for subsequently his brother wrote, "However far he might be from home and loved ones, the glance of his mother's eye, the wave of her hand still

exercised over him, under the blessing of Heaven, a controlling influence."

The glimpse of the Cox family when Melville was ten is pitiful enough. Off somewhere in the West Indies the father was dead. The older brothers were at sea. And one day Melville, when he was ten, kissed his mother, his passionately loved twin brother and his little sisters and left home for work on a farm. About once a year afterward until he was seventeen, when he left the farm for a book store, did he see the home folks. Farm work afforded scanty time for study, except at night. Then, Lincoln-like, through the long winter evenings he sprawled before the open fire and dug at his "figures." The change from farm to book-selling was a happy one — and he eked out his scanty learning by browsing through the volumes on the shelves until he had acquired a very fair sort of education.

Mr. Cox's journal leaves no doubt as to his belief in conviction for sin and salvation through Jesus Christ. It also states that with "unremitting attention" his mother "taught him in childhood the principles of the Christian religion." He sums up his own case in a letter to Bishop McKendree in 1832 by saying: "In July, 1818, God for Christ's sake forgave my sins, and imparted to my soul peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, while almost from the depths



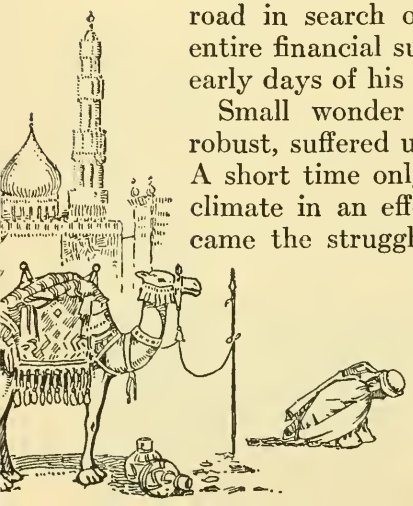
of despair I was pleading for mercy, in the woods."

The supreme desire of his life to see the salvation of souls was kindled in Melville B. Cox when he himself was "born again"; and never in the brief span of his earthly days did this all-absorbing, and in his case all-consuming, passion decrease or depart. What could he do but preach?

And preach he did, his experiences tallying with those of many other Methodist circuit riders, who in those days were weaving into the fabric of Methodism the principles which later were to make it great.

He himself speaks of "lying on something like a bed," on a cold winter night, in a room through whose chinks he could count the stars, to awake in the morning with his bed half covered with snow. Traveling through new and unknown settlements with night upon him, he was more than once refused shelter. Midnight often found him still trudging along a road in search of a roof to cover him. His entire financial support during one year in the early days of his ministry was ten dollars.

Small wonder that his health, never too robust, suffered under the strain of such a life. A short time only and we find him in a milder climate in an effort to secure strength. Then came the struggle against odds for life itself.

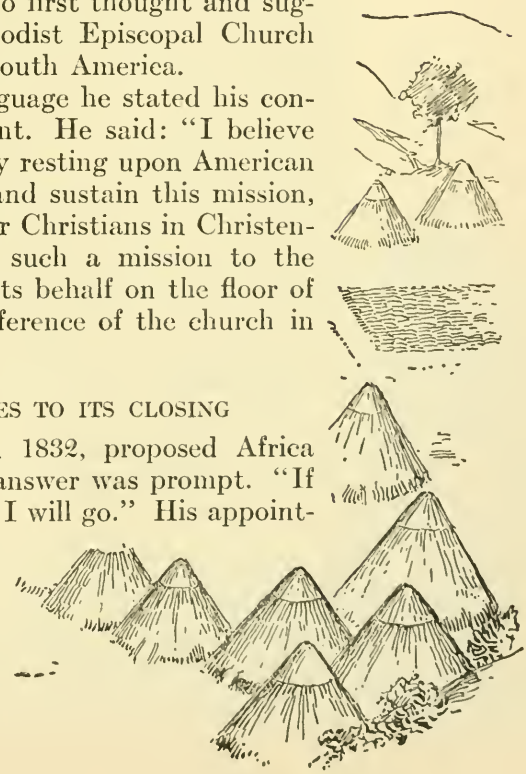


Sorrows crowded upon him; the first, the passing of his wife — almost a bride — and a baby daughter, left him desolate. Still he battled with disease and still he preached. Often entirely prostrated after preaching, he would not cease to try. Through it all his superlative ambition to be instrumental in saving souls never diminished.

HEARING THE CALL

As an undercurrent of Cox's life there ran apparently the idea of special missionary service. In this connection let us not overlook the fact that it was he who first thought and suggested that the Methodist Episcopal Church establish missions in South America.

In most definite language he stated his convictions upon this point. He said: "I believe there is a responsibility resting upon American Christians to project and sustain this mission, which rests on no other Christians in Christendom." Cox proposed such a mission to the bishops and spoke in its behalf on the floor of the sixth General Conference of the church in Philadelphia.



THE STORY MOVES TO ITS CLOSING

Bishop Hedding, in 1832, proposed Africa to Melville Cox. His answer was prompt. "If the Lord wills, I think I will go." His appoint-

ment to Liberia followed soon. In May, 1832, he was writing to his brother, "The Episcopacy has concluded to send me to Liberia. I hail it as the most joyful appointment I have ever received from them."

Farewells — eternal farewells — were said to the dear mother, now bowed with age, to relatives and friends, and Cox left the old home at Hallowell forever. He stopped at Wesleyan University en route to Baltimore. There occurred the conversation with a friend which has since become famous.

"If I die in Africa," he said in taking leave, "you must come and write my epitaph." "I will," said his friend, "but what shall I write?" "Write," said Mr. Cox, "let a thousand fall before Africa be given up." Never spoke a soul more sincere.

The voyage by which Methodism's first foreign missionary was to reach his African field was begun when on November 6, 1832, the ship "Jupiter" swung off and out from Norfolk, and took her way eastward. Four long months had dragged by when, on March 8, after many vicissitudes on the way, he wrote, "Thank God, I am now at Liberia."

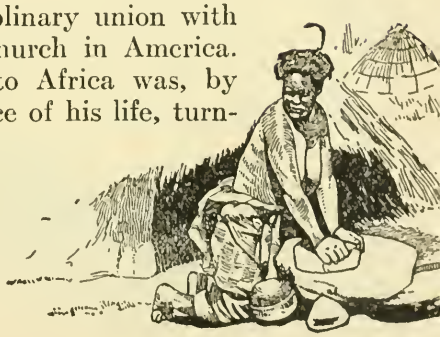
That Cox was a man with the far look is demonstrated by the plans he had drawn up for the development of the work in Liberia, even before he had set his foot upon its shores.

That his ideas were reasonable and practicable is proved by the further fact that very many of his proposed projects have since been adopted and put into operation.

The martyr-spirit possessed him thoroughly and till the very end. It was well that he could write his brother he would prefer to be an humble missionary in Africa, begging his bread from kraal to kraal, than to be the emperor of its millions. His living quarters were far from princely. The list of furnishings in his house, through which when it rained the waters ran in tub-fulls, was a table, a candlestick, cups, saucers, and a cot. Because of the high prices of meat he ate none, but according to his own word his rations, morning, noon and night, were rice.

Only four months was the term of this first Methodist missionary to Africa, then he was furloughed to fairer shores. But in this brief time he wrought broadly and well. Probably his most enduring and important accomplishment for the church was his work of organization. He gathered together the fragments of Methodism consisting of a chaotic collection of churches and preachers and brought them into firm and organic disciplinary union with the Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

His outstanding service to Africa was, by the heroic, deliberate sacrifice of his life, turn-



ing upon her and her immeasurable needs the sympathetic attention of the Christian world. Four attacks in quick succession of the dread fever which has cursed Africa for ages — and on July 21, 1833, the martyr soul of Melville B. Cox went to its crowning.

THE PIONEER SUCCESSION

No attempt can here be made to give entirely and in logical order the history of Methodism's African work. Rather it is the purpose to focus once more the eye of the church upon the heroic personalities who stood for God and humanity in the midst of gross darkness and made such history possible.

Before Cox set sail for Liberia, two other young ministers, Rufus Spaulding and Samuel Wright, had been appointed as his assistants. He had expected them to go with him, but it was not until after he had fallen that these two men, Mr. Wright accompanied by his young wife, embarked upon the same ship, the "Jupiter," which had carried Cox, and turned their faces toward Ethiopia's outstretched hands.

Tucked away among them somewhere was a little body, known as Saphronia Farrington, the *first woman* to be sent out by the Methodist Episcopal church as a missionary to a foreign field.

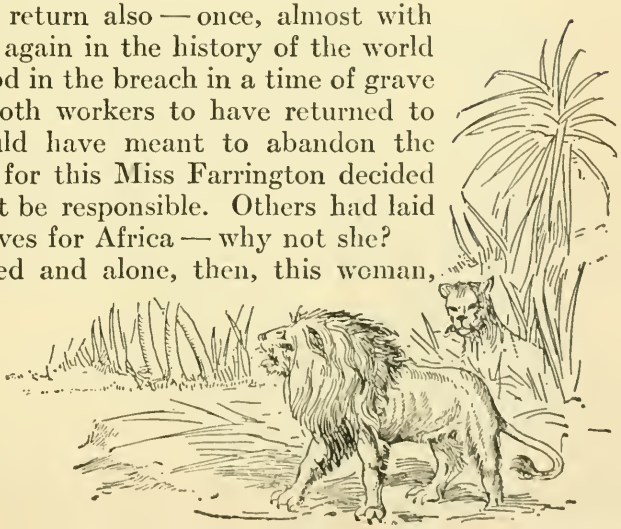
Before the little company sailed the staggering news of Cox's death had reached them, but undaunted in the face of the tragedy, and full of the hope of youth that such a fate could not overtake them, they started.

After a voyage of fifty-six days they arrived at Monrovia on the first day of the new year, 1834. So again, after being six months without a guiding hand, the new mission was equipped with a staff.

Once more the gaunt arm of the white man's foe — the fever — was raised to descend with fatal blow, and in two short months, Rufus Spaulding and Saphronia Farrington, their own veins throbbing with fever, were alone at the station, and there were three graves instead of one in the little cemetery.

In May, Spaulding, unable longer to combat the fever, decided to return to the States. Certain that Miss Farrington's remaining in Liberia would cost her her life, he repeatedly urged her to return also — once, almost with success. But again in the history of the world a woman stood in the breach in a time of grave crisis. For both workers to have returned to America would have meant to abandon the mission, and for this Miss Farrington decided she could not be responsible. Others had laid down their lives for Africa — why not she?

Fever-racked and alone, then, this woman,

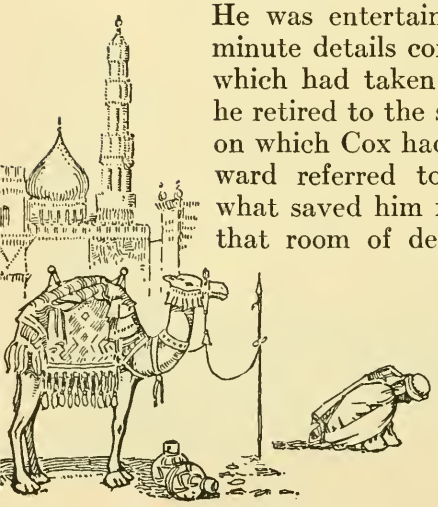


the sole representative of the Methodist Church in all Africa, lay and battled for life. But God needed that one woman to hold in her frail hands the remnant of his work, and Saphronia Farrington did not die.

Her testimony of her almost miraculous deliverance from the clutch of the fever is sound and convincing. It suddenly left her as she prayed. She smiled when the physician assured her that he had never in all his experience wrought so great a cure. So did this heroic woman hold Africa for Methodism. Her story should not be forgotten.

JOHN SEYS

It needed a man of some mental poise, as well as religion, to enter the environment which faced the Rev. John Seys, superintendent of the Liberian work after Cox. The first night after he arrived at Monrovia, he occupied the mission house in which both Cox and the Wrights had died only a few months previously. He was entertained during the evening with minute details concerning the appalling events which had taken place in the mission. Later he retired to the same room, and the same bed on which Cox had breathed his last! He afterward referred to that night, declaring that what saved him from hours of sleeplessness in that room of death was a good constitution

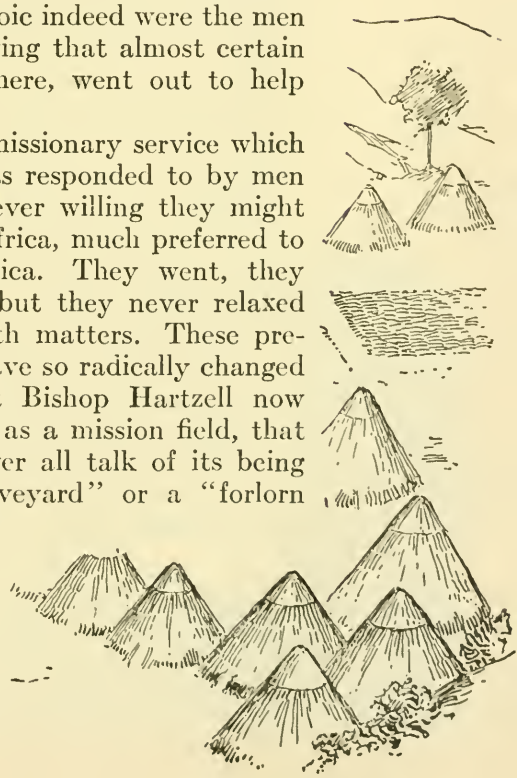


and a firm, unshaken trust in God. Undoubtedly it was this same happy combination which enabled Dr. Seys to give twenty-six trying but faithful and fruitful years of service to Africa.

Tragic enough has been this recital of suffering and death — the toll of the West Coast of Africa for its own redemption. W. T. Stead spoke the truth when he said that in the Dark Continent the frontier had advanced on stepping stones of missionaries' graves.

In those early days precautionary measures against the deadly effects of climate and disease were little known. Heroic indeed were the men and women who, knowing that almost certain death awaited them there, went out to help save Africa.

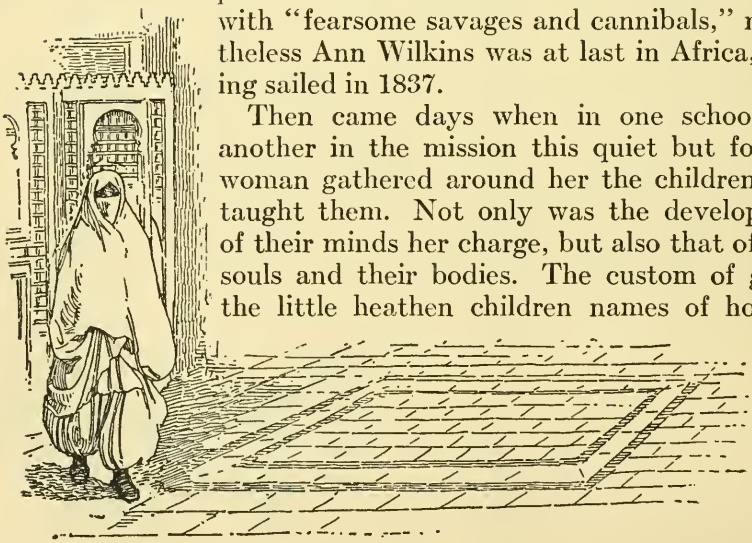
The call to African missionary service which came in later years was responded to by men and women who, however willing they might have been to die for Africa, much preferred to live and work in Africa. They went, they prayed, they worked, but they never relaxed their vigilance in health matters. These precautionary measures have so radically changed earlier conditions that Bishop Hartzell now says concerning Africa as a mission field, that there should end forever all talk of its being the "missionaries' graveyard" or a "forlorn hope."



ANN WILKINS

There may have been bank notes in that collection at the Sing Sing Camp Meeting one day in 1836. However, another kind of note was drawn from out the coin in the plate by Dr. Nathan Bangs, secretary of the Missionary Society, who presided upon that particular occasion. It was a note by means of which there was to be invested, instead of money, a life for Africa. Dr. Seys, with thrilling words had made a burning appeal. Ann Wilkins responded by dropping into the plate a bit of paper on which was written, "A sister who has but little money at command gives that little cheerfully and is willing to give her life as a female teacher, if wanted."

The "female teacher" was very much wanted. She was naturally apprehensive when she thought of the long, hard voyage; she feared a possible future encounter in her chosen field with "fearsome savages and cannibals," nevertheless Ann Wilkins was at last in Africa, having sailed in 1837.

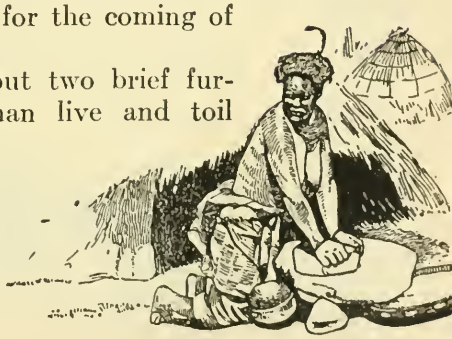


Then came days when in one school and another in the mission this quiet but forceful woman gathered around her the children, and taught them. Not only was the development of their minds her charge, but also that of their souls and their bodies. The custom of giving the little heathen children names of honored

friends in America — one which is still somewhat in vogue among our workers in Africa — may have originated with this ingenious schoolma'am. At any rate it is amusing to read of black little "Nathan Bangs," "William McKendree" and others. Today we hear of the son of a native king named "William Burt." Doubtless there are sons of many kings and chiefs who proudly wear the name "Joseph Hartzell."

Back into the interior went the children of Ann Wilkins's schools. They carried with them the news that their people in the kraals were included in God's plan for Africa. Nor was the story forgotten. Many years later an expedition was sent out to settle a disputed boundary between British and Liberian territory. In the course of the journey a town was entered from which Mohammedan missionaries had been strictly excluded. Upon the chaplain of the party's inquiring the reason for the extraordinary circumstance he was told that young people of the kraal had gone to Ann Wilkins's school near Monrovia, where they had learned to read her Bible and love her God. "And so," said they of the village, "all these years we have waited for the coming of Ann Wilkins's God."

For twenty years, with but two brief furloughs, did this good woman live and toil



for Africa. She returned to the homeland to be loved and honored by the whole church.

She lies at rest in beautiful Maple Grove Cemetery, Long Island. Over her grave rises a monument erected by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, though Mrs. Wilkins had finished her work long before that Society was organized. Upon the monument is this inscription: "Here lies Ann Wilkins, a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church to Liberia from 1836 to 1856. Died November 13, 1857, aged fifty-one years. Having little money at command she gave herself."

A LONE WOMAN

Agnes MacAllister of Liberia preceded the Scotch missionary, Mary Slessor of Calabar, to Africa, by twelve years. She answered in 1889 a call made for volunteers by William Taylor. Tracing the almost unbelievable careers of Agnes MacAllister and Mary Slessor, both of whom pioneered in most strenuous and effective fashion among the lowest pagan population ever spread upon this fair world, one can but be struck with the similarity between them in character and experience.

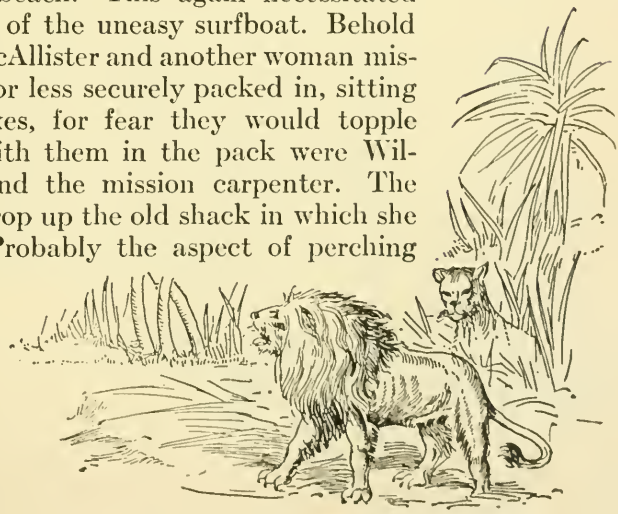
Agnes MacAllister, even in girlhood serious-minded and reflective, was called "queer" by her gayer friends. When she announced her intention of being a missionary to Africa,

they said they always knew she would do something impossible like that. Her family was not enthusiastic over the project, for permitting her to go to Africa, even so late as 1888, seemed like burying her alive. At least so they said.

But Agnes, deep in her own heart, *knew* that she must go to Africa. So she went.

It may be true that France has more good harbors on Africa's shores than all the other proprietors of the country put together. Very few of them now, and less of them in '89, were located on the West Coast, bordered by reefs and pounded by "a ceaseless, merciless surf." Actually getting into Africa from the steamer by becoming a passenger in a dancing surfboat is evidently not an experience to be coveted; at any rate it made sufficient impression upon the new missionary to be referred to in her own autobiography.

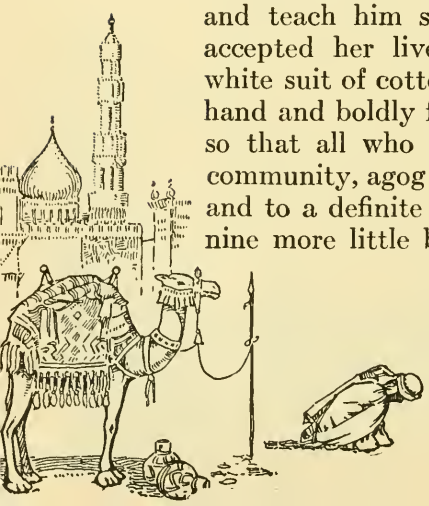
The first station to which Miss MacAllister was assigned — Garraway — was a good twenty miles up the beach. This again necessitated the requisition of the uneasy surfboat. Behold then, Miss MacAllister and another woman missionary, more or less securely packed in, sitting atop their boxes, for fear they would topple overboard. With them in the pack were William Taylor and the mission carpenter. The men went to prop up the old shack in which she was to live. Probably the aspect of perching



on their boxes and sculling along those curling green waves in an open boat did not appeal to them as in the least humorous! The shack was no palace for a queen when they reached it, but Miss MacAllister began at once to "make things do," as missionaries must, even to this day — more's the shame.

PIONEER PEDAGOGY

She opened her school the day after she arrived at Garraway. The children began coming at six A.M., and continued in relays until night when she sent them home to go to bed, the only way she could get rid of them. Even then they reluctantly "inched" along, whining, "We want to learn more book." When later she insisted upon having the children with her constantly, fearing the undoing of her work with them under the evil influences of their homes, her school decreased. Finally, to her amazement, a witch-doctor presented to her his small son for keeps, saying, "Take this boy and teach him sense proper." She not only accepted her lively gift but, making him a white suit of cotton cloth, she took him by the hand and boldly fared forth through the kraal, so that all who cared might see. The whole community, agog with curiosity, certainly cared and to a definite end. Before the week passed nine more little black boys were handed over

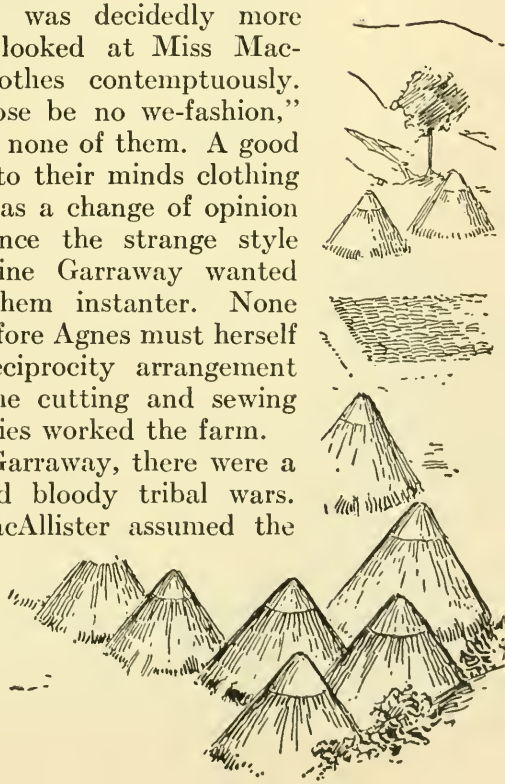


bodily, and Agnes MacAllister began to have her hands full. After that she was never without her black children around her, following each one of them, as for one reason or another they left her, with a mother's interest.

Besides "proper book sense," however, this American girl had many and more difficult matters to teach. One was proper farm methods. For this purpose she not only established a large farm, but worked it. She planted vegetables herself, besides setting out five hundred coffee trees.

Teaching the pickaninnies as well as real folks to wear clothes was decidedly more difficult. The women looked at Miss MacAllister's American clothes contemptuously. They said, "Them close be no we-fashion," and at first would have none of them. A good supply of jewelry was to their minds clothing enough. Very slowly was a change of opinion brought about, but once the strange style was set, all of feminine Garraway wanted clothes and wanted them instanter. None knew how to sew, therefore Agnes must herself do much of it. A reciprocity arrangement solved the question, she cutting and sewing while the Garraway ladies worked the farm.

During her term at Garraway, there were a number of terrible and bloody tribal wars. During these Miss MacAllister assumed the



role of surgeon and nurse, although she had shrunk always, as she herself acknowledged, from anything of the kind. One instance will suffice to prove that her surgical work was both thorough and effective. In one of the bloody clashes between tribes, a head man was deeply slashed across his face, and it was feared that he was dying. Miss MacAllister, whose only surgical supplies were scissors, bandages, sticking-plaster, arnica, and needle and thread, was summoned and went to the injured man. Her treatment was simple enough. Cleansing the wound thoroughly, she sewed it carefully together with her needle and thread, and applied arnica! Many such instances might be related showing her stout heart and splendid courage, through these awful days when she did little but care for wounded warriors.

IN LABORS MORE ABUNDANT

A catalogue of her deeds cannot be here recorded. She, with two of her boys, traveled on her itineraries up the river, often climbing out to pull the canoe over fallen trees, while a deluge of rain soaked her. Once, in the house of a native king to whom she went to preach, she slept on a bed of boards four feet long, with the king's greasy old coat for a pillow — for which was substituted later a stick of wood.

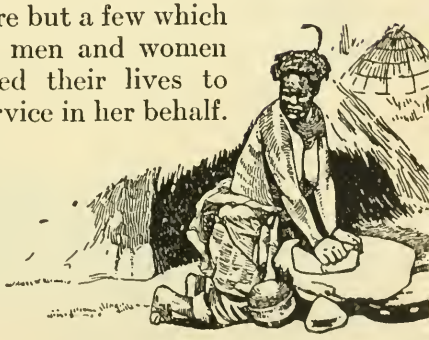
There was a fire in the room, but no windows; the mosquitoes were ferocious; the fowls roosted in the corners, and she spent much of the night driving away the rats. Surely a combination hard to be outdone! She broke up a sasswood ordeal more than once; defied and exposed the devil-doctors; fought the importation of rum by which the natives were crazed; and capped the climax by taking her twenty-nine children down to the mission headquarters miles away so they could see a real Christmas celebration.

God bless the memory of Agnes MacAllister!

She was no masculine monstrosity. She accomplished her prodigious labors by the help of Him who said, "My grace is sufficient — I will not leave thee." When entirely alone at the station she wrote: "Many a time as it grew dark, I would go down the hillside to some quiet spot, tell Jesus all about it, have a good cry, and come back to take up the duties of mother and teacher to the children, preacher and missionary to the people, doctor to the sick, and superintendent of the work in general."

A HERO ROLL

The stories here set down are but a few which might be told. Other heroic men and women in the past have consecrated their lives to Africa, and rendered noble service in her behalf.



Today we have more missionaries in Africa than ever before. Nobly are they sustaining the traditions and standards of the past, and with improved yet still much limited facilities, they are pushing forward with ever-increasing success.

Not even a few recorded fragments of the history of Methodist Missions in Africa, such as these, would be complete without mention of one of the most strikingly picturesque personalities that ever crossed our missionary horizon — Bishop William Taylor. Though his dream of self-supporting missions in Africa was a rosy one, it was but a dream. He fought a losing fight. But his efforts were sincere, and by them, and not by results, let him be judged.

In a day when Africa was not a favorite subject in Methodist missionary circles, and general depression in regard to the outcome of the work there was in the heart of the church, William Taylor never lowered the flag. By his own heroic effort, Africa was once more pushed into the line of nations waiting to receive from the Methodist Episcopal Church the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and there, measurably because of him, she stands today.

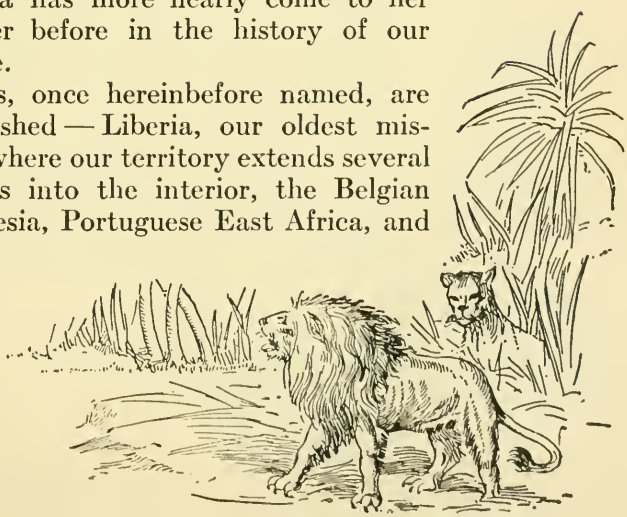
Those who were at the General Conference at Cleveland in 1896, saw one day a picture which can never be forgotten. It was when

the tall, spare form of Bishop Taylor, the veteran of many years and many lands, towered above the kneeling figure of Joseph C. Hartzell, the newly elected bishop for Africa, with hands laid reverently upon his head in blessing.

One, after the long day's march, had laid down the burden which the other, with strong heart and steady hand, was to take up.

The load was lifted, and Dr. Hartzell began his career as Missionary Bishop for Africa — a career which through twenty years brought nothing but honor to the church. It was no easy way he trekked. He found Methodism in fragments, stations undermanned, and the best of them poorly equipped. Such schools as existed were loosely organized, and debts were legion. Surely a Herculean task had been assigned him. But his heart was hopeful and his grip was strong, and today so far as Methodism is concerned, as the result of his administration, Africa has more nearly come to her own than ever before in the history of our missions there.

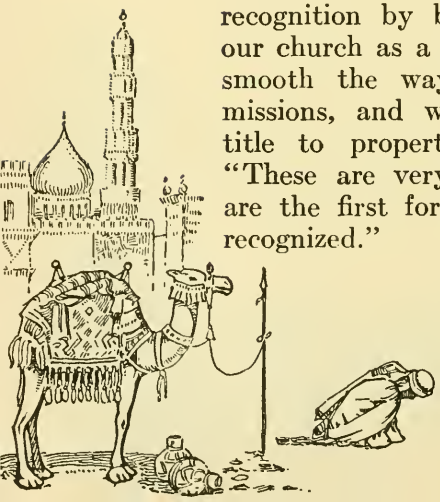
Six stations, once hereinbefore named, are firmly established — Liberia, our oldest mission, Angola where our territory extends several hundred miles into the interior, the Belgian Congo, Rhodesia, Portuguese East Africa, and North Africa.



Bishop Hartzell's quadrennial report in 1916 says of these stations: "The Methodist Episcopal Church now has six mission fields in Africa. Although widely separated, every one of them can be reached by steamship or railway more easily than Asbury could visit his line of conferences on horseback from western Kentucky to New England. They are divided into one annual conference, four mission conferences and one mission." Previous to 1914 these stations were located in various sections controlled by five different powers.

A most strategic move was that by which Bishop Hartzell established personal relations between himself and a number of the European rulers of these territories. In the instance of a certain grave crisis the foreign minister in one European capital informed an American minister that any missions under his flag in Africa, with which Bishop Hartzell was connected, need have no fear of trouble.

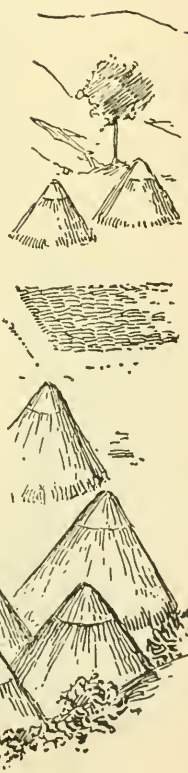
A matter of great gratification has been the recognition by both Algeria and Tunisia of our church as a legal body. This will greatly smooth the way for the operations of our missions, and will permit us to hold legal title to property. Bishop Hartzell says: "These are very great concessions, and we are the first foreign religious body to be so recognized."



THEN AND NOW

What Bishop Hartzell found, twenty years ago was: The Liberia Annual Conference; some remnants of Bishop Taylor's work in Angola; a group of heroic missionaries and some property, two small stations on the Congo, soon abandoned; four small beginnings in East Africa; twelve foreign missionaries; ninety-five native preachers and teachers; four thousand church members; forty-nine Sunday schools with three thousand enrolled; one seminary; a few private schools, and church property amounting to $75,000.

What he left in 1916 was: The Liberia Annual Conference; four mission conferences; one mission with six organized centers; ninety-five missionaries; 400 native preachers and teachers; 17,000 church members with hosts of adherents; 271 Sunday schools with 14,709 enrolled; 10,000 students enrolled in our schools and church property valued at $500,000.



At the General Conference of 1916, Dr. Eben S. Johnson was elected Missionary Bishop for Africa, to succeed Bishop Hartzell. At the same conference Dr. Alexander P. Camphor was elected Missionary Bishop for Liberia, to succeed Bishop Isaiah B. Scott.

NOTE: Our missions in the Madeira Islands are usually grouped with those of Africa. They are omitted here as this study pertains only to the continent of Africa.

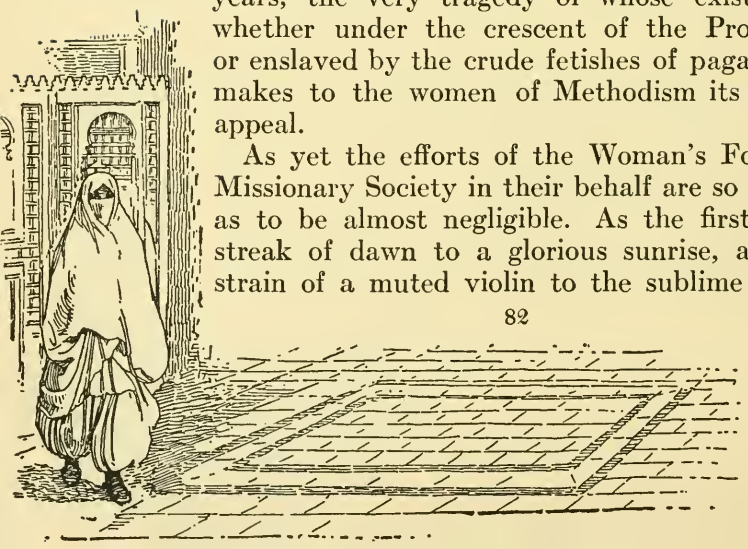
CHAPTER IV

Woman Under the Crescent

TWO forces in Africa contend for the souls of its womankind. One is the blighting, withering power of Mohammed; the other is the demon-rife faith of her pagan fathers. With both of these forces the workers of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society are coming in constant contact. Into the struggle they are infusing another element, the gospel of Jesus Christ, in whose scheme of salvation there is a place for woman; by his power, strong, pure and sweet she may rise to this place.

Taking Bishop Hartzell's estimate of thirty millions as the population of Methodist territory in Africa, there are probably not less than ten millions of women above the age of sixteen years, the very tragedy of whose existence, whether under the crescent of the Prophet, or enslaved by the crude fetishes of paganism, makes to the women of Methodism its mute appeal.

As yet the efforts of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in their behalf are so slight as to be almost negligible. As the first pale streak of dawn to a glorious sunrise, as the strain of a muted violin to the sublime sym-

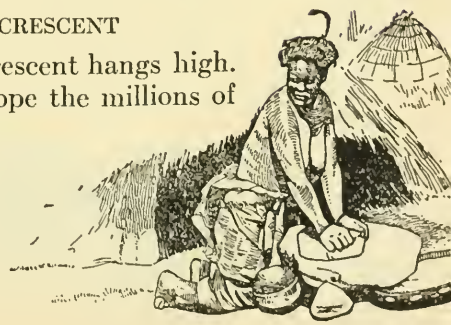


phony, so almost inconsiderable is the contact of this great organization with the lives of the women in this vastest, neediest field in all the world. A complete muster of our forces under the Woman's Society, as officially given in the reports of 1916, shows that the work is but at the stage of beginnings. The centers of operation are three — North Africa, Angola and Rhodesia, at which points there are twelve missionaries and two Bible women. Out from these, among women and girls in homes and harems, countryside, kraals and crowded cities, go our missionaries to pursue their divine quest for souls.

Such institutions as we number, a possible five, are conducted as home schools. Religious instruction and moral culture are of the first account, though obstinate Moslem prejudice and gross pagan practices are formidable obstacles to much-longed-for results. Books are dipped into, and laundry tubs as well. In a word, education is accompanied by such industrial arts and home-craft as will insure cleanliness and attractiveness in the homes over which some day our girls will intelligently preside as wives and mothers.

THE OVERHANGING CRESCENT

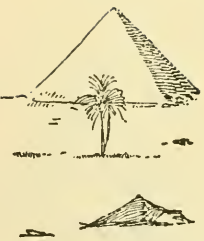
Above North Africa the crescent hangs high. In its dim, uncertain ray grope the millions of



Arab and Kabyle women to whom Methodism's daughters have a difficult but blessed mission — difficult, because nowhere is Moslem bigotry more galling — blessed, because even here may be known freedom in Christ Jesus.

Readers of these pages there will be whose eyes have seen, possibly with disguised admiration, the silent, white-draped forms of the women of old Algiers moving through the streets of the native town. A fascinating mystery may envelop them as do their veils, their beauty and their graces may be sung by Moslem bards, but their lives are as dark and tortuous as the streets they tread, their place upon the lowest social level is forever fixed.

That woman is vastly inferior to man is the general opinion held by the masculine portion of the entire non-Christian world. This is especially emphasized by laws and customs which had their origin under the green turban and in the daily life of the Prophet of Mecca. Small wonder that in Mohammedan lands there runs the proverb — that sure index to public sentiment — "The threshold of the house weeps forty days when a girl is born." It neglects to add that the girl weeps all the rest of her life.



This attitude of the masculine Mohammedan toward his women does not crystallize solely in a passing word or sneer. It works itself out

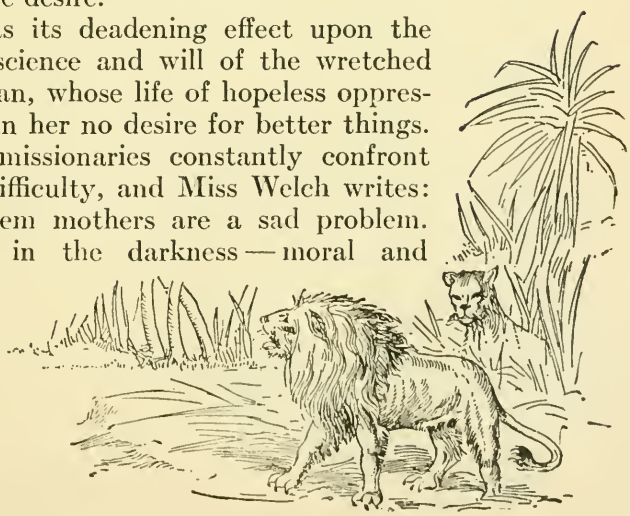
into the tragedies of living death, and not infrequently into actual death itself.

A traveler stopping overnight in the Kabyle mountains of North Africa was standing with his host upon a dizzy height, when an old woman who was picking up bits of wood near by slipped over a precipice and went crashing to her death on the rocks below. The horror-stricken Englishman observed that his host, far from being agitated over the occurrence, was as calm as if nothing had happened, merely remarking, "It was nothing but a woman and anyway, being old, her time had come."

In all our North African work among women the absolute despotism of the Mohammedan head of the house must be reckoned with. The inwrought ideas of the inferiority of things feminine among Mohammedan men relegate their women to a condition of spineless nonentity which does not depreciate their value as toys, drudges, and slaves to every masculine whim, caprice or base desire.

All this has its deadening effect upon the intellect, conscience and will of the wretched Moslem woman, whose life of hopeless oppression has left in her no desire for better things. Our Algiers missionaries constantly confront this serious difficulty, and Miss Welch writes:

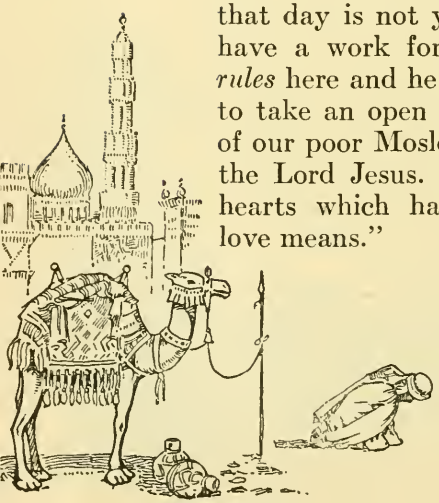
"Our Moslem mothers are a sad problem. Brought up in the darkness — moral and



spiritual — of Mohammedanism, they seem to have no desire to rise higher, and sadder still, they are content to see their girls pass along the same way. They maintain that what was good enough for them is good enough for their children, and often we see bitter jealousy when the girl does, seemingly, succeed where the mother has failed. The Moslem man still holds womanhood under his heel, and he has no intention of relieving the pressure. Two of the women want to be baptized, but the desire has ever been quenched by the men of their families. The women look at us with lifeless eyes and say, 'I cannot understand why I am not baptized; but I can't be.' Are they drugged until their will is destroyed? Is it innate fatalism, or is it the iron heel that holds them in bondage?"

Miss Emily Smith, our first missionary in North Africa, writes in much the same strain:

"The work among Moslem women has gone well. I wish we could write of baptisms, but that day is not yet, nor can it come until we have a work formed among men. The man *rules* here and he must be won if the woman is to take an open stand for Christ. Still, many of our poor Moslem sisters believe on and love the Lord Jesus. The love of Christ has won hearts which had never really known what love means."



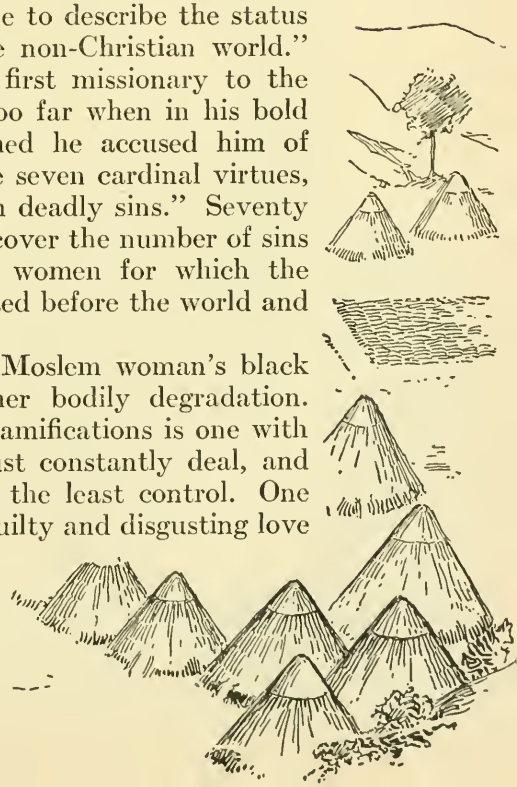
WOMAN'S MANY BONDS

Many are the specific and concrete forms by means of which this diabolical prejudice against women expresses itself. In fact the fatal blot upon Islam, wherever found, is its unspeakable degradation of women, bodily, mentally, spiritually. Robert E. Speer says:

"The very chapter in the Mohammedan Bible which deals with the legal status of woman, and which provides that every Mohammedan may have four legal wives and as many concubines or slave girls as his right hand can hold, goes by the title of 'The Cow.' One could get no better title to describe the status of woman through the non-Christian world."

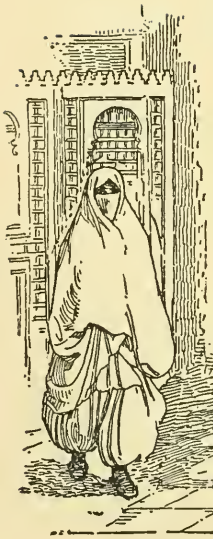
Raymund Lull, the first missionary to the Moslems, went none too far when in his bold attack upon Mohammed he accused him of being "destitute of the seven cardinal virtues, and guilty of the seven deadly sins." Seventy times seven could not cover the number of sins against Mohammedan women for which the Prophet must be indicted before the world and pronounced "guilty."

At the head of the Moslem woman's black list of woes stands her bodily degradation. This matter of many ramifications is one with which our workers must constantly deal, and over which they have the least control. One of Mohammed's own guilty and disgusting love



affairs is responsible for the veiling and seclusion of women in Moslem lands. Her veil, should her exacting lord or the caprice of an impossible mother-in-law permit her to go upon the street, is no cobweb of lace to keep my lady's soft skin from possible tan. The veil in which the woman of Algiers swathes herself is of coarse white cotton cloth. This is drawn up over chin and nose to the eyes, forming a slit for them by meeting the edge of the head drapery drawn down from above. The arrangement is suffocating so that breathing is difficult. In Constantine the women are draped similarly but in black, a most hideous and uncanny costume.

The sight of a beautiful young girl of fifteen as she appeared at a children's class at the mission house in Algiers, with olive-tinted skin, white teeth, laughing brown eyes — and then, in the twinkling of an eye, secluded and unsexed in her garb for the street,— gave the writer a shock forever to be remembered.



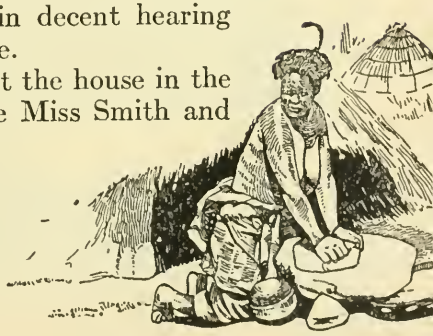
Probably one-half of the whole population of the Moslem world is female. The rules of veiling, and of seclusion in their houses, more or less strictly observed, apply to all of them.

Undoubtedly there are Moslem homes in the great cities of North Africa — Algiers, Constantine and Tunis — where the material comforts of life, even its luxuries, are to be found,

and where secluded women, bejeweled and silken clad, walk upon priceless rugs and order about their slaves. But who cares to serve a life imprisonment even in a palace? The bars may be of gold, but it is a hideous certainty that they *are bars*. Even these, they tell us — creatures like all women of social bent, and who love their kind — droop and wither under such a system. More than one missionary who has won her way into the heart of some North African harem will tell you that in a whispered confidence she has been told how tired the women are of idleness and how they hate the monotony.

Although our missionaries have entrance into some homes of wealth, by far the largest number they reach are in wretched native houses. Any number of families may be huddled into one of them. The windowless walls are streetward; the series of rooms, one or more of which may constitute the dwelling place of a large family, face a filthy court whose only redeeming feature is the patch of blue sky above it — the one thing uncontaminated by the indescribable foulness. Sanitary measures are unheard of and undreamed of. This results in practices which cannot be described in decent hearing or set forth in black and white.

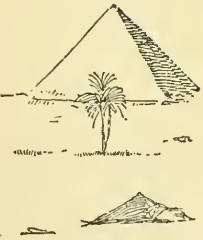
It is gratifying to note that the house in the native town in Algiers, where Miss Smith and



Miss Welch have their classes for Moslem women, has recently been thoroughly renovated and whitewashed, while a weeding out of some of the surplus population has resulted in more decent housing for the tenants, and a safer place for missionaries to work.

In such habitations as these are thousands of women in Algiers and other North African cities secluded, imprisoned. No fragrance from the wonderful gardens reaches them, no cool breath from the sea. They have no work to do in their hovels destitute of furniture. They cannot read. Lucky for them if the day brings with it food with which to stave off actual hunger. What is left for them but to brawl in the courtyard, to retail current scandal, or to pass on from mother to child the vile tales which have filtered down to them through hundreds of years of obscene Mohammedan literature?

So early are they secluded — "hidden" as they truthfully say — that many a woman, under the stifling regime of this living death, has not even a faint recollection of God's out-of-doors. A missionary tells of a woman whom she has visited, who had never once since her marriage, forty years before, been outside the walls of her home. She pitifully implored her visitor to tell her something about the growing flowers, saying, as well she might, "Ah, you are



DAH'BYIA

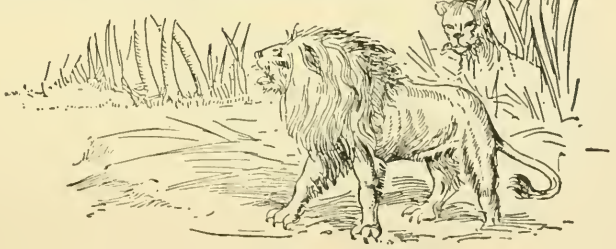
happy women, free to go here and there and enjoy life!"

THE TOLL OF DEATH

Wasting diseases and the terrible ravages of tuberculosis do their deadly work among these Moslem women. The inalienable right of every creature of God's hand to physical exercise and fresh, life-giving air has been denied them. Annually, in consequence, death levies a heavy toll, and thousands of them needlessly sink into early graves, leaving to their children a woeful heritage.

No better or sadder proof of this do Methodist women need than that of the death from tuberculosis of Dah'byia, the first baptized convert in the work of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in North Africa. Her blood was tainted by that of the frail, plague-scourged generations of women before her, and at eighteen this brilliant, beautiful life, rich in promise of service among her own people, ceased upon earth to bear its fruitage in heaven. The hearts of our workers were wrung with grief. For her own sake they had loved the child — for Christ's sake they had trained her for his service. Of Dah'byia, her brief life and triumphant passing, Miss Welch writes:

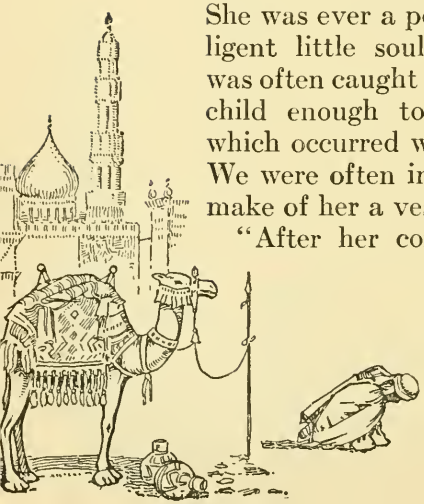
"She was only four years old when we found her living with her father in a dark recess under



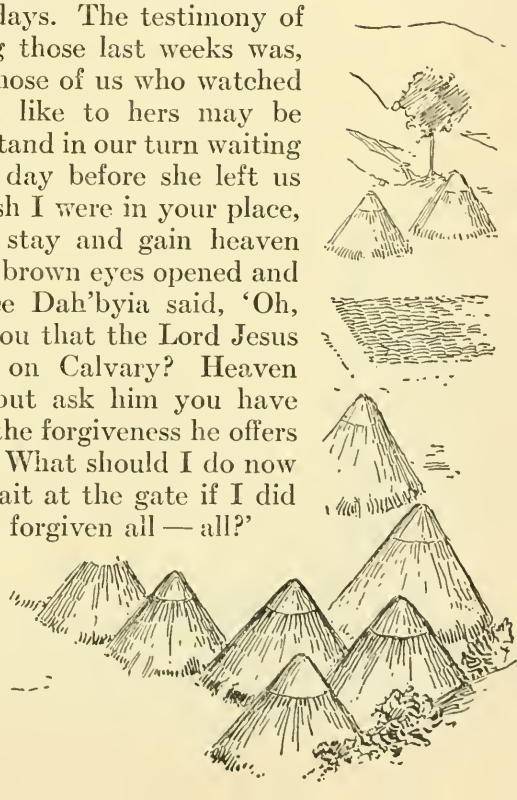
the staircase of an Arab house. It was so dark that we sent the child's brother to buy a candle which we lighted before we could discern the faces of the inhabitants of that miserable hole. When we did, it was to see a woman lying ill with smallpox on the floor. She, with her baby and the sick father, was thankful indeed for the simple medicine and food which we were able to give. We visited them a few times, and then Dah'byia one day declared her intention of coming to live with us 'forever.' When we left without her, she ran down the street crying, 'I want to come and live with you-u-u.'

"A few weeks later she had her desire. Her stepmother came to our house to bid us farewell, as she and two children were going back to the mountains. On rising to go, Dah'byia, a tiny little bunch, was found crowded into an impossible space in the corner under my bed. She said she meant 'to live with the disciples of Jesus Christ all her life,'— and she did. She was ever a perfectly pure and a very intelligent little soul, though hot-tempered. She was often caught lying and stealing — a difficult child enough to lead, until her conversion, which occurred when she was eleven years old. We were often in despair lest we should never make of her a vessel meet for the Master's use.

"After her conversion it was all different.



'I have given myself to the Lord Jesus tonight and he has written my name in his Book and washed me from my sins, Lala Dora,' she said to me as she came out of the meeting that night. Having suffered much, I replied, 'By their fruits ye shall know them, my daughter.' Poor little girl! She inherited from her Moslem parents nothing but things contrary to what is best, and perhaps it was only when she was dying that I realized how great had been the fight, and how *real.* 'I have tried to follow him, but *how* I have had to fight against my temptations God alone knows,' she said often to me during the last days. The testimony of all who saw her during those last weeks was, 'How gentle she is!' Those of us who watched her, prayed that faith like to hers may be granted to us when we stand in our turn waiting at the gate. Only the day before she left us a girl said to her, 'I wish I were in your place, Dah'byia, but I must stay and gain heaven first.' Suddenly the big brown eyes opened and in a clear, earnest voice Dah'byia said, 'Oh, how often must I tell you that the Lord Jesus Christ shed his blood on Calvary? Heaven is yours! If you will but ask him you have nothing to do but take the forgiveness he offers you and to follow him. What should I do now with all my sins as I wait at the gate if I did not *know* that Jesus has forgiven all — all?'

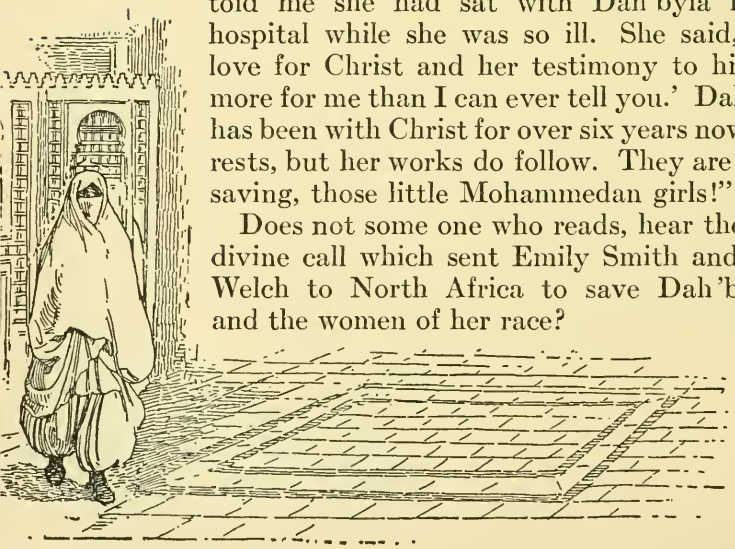


"And so she left us, our child of twelve years' love and training — left us when but seventeen. How we rejoiced when she was baptized — when she brought us her *Certificat d'Etude* — when, through Miss Smith's ever patient, never wavering, careful training, she learned such subjects as comparative religions, three languages, native cooking, needlework, lace work, and much besides, which we fondly believed was preparing her for her life among her own people. But — 'she had seen the face of Jesus,' and 'he who has once seen his face, can never be content on earth again.'"

Today comes to the author's desk from Algiers a letter which says:

"You remember Dah'byia, the Moslem child who came to us when four years old, and who died in her eighteenth year? Only yesterday a poor Spanish woman met me in the town and told me she had sat with Dah'byia in the hospital while she was so ill. She said, 'Her love for Christ and her testimony to him did more for me than I can ever tell you.' Dah'byia has been with Christ for over six years now. She rests, but her works do follow. They are worth saving, those little Mohammedan girls!"

Does not some one who reads, hear the same divine call which sent Emily Smith and Dora Welch to North Africa to save Dah'byia — and the women of her race?



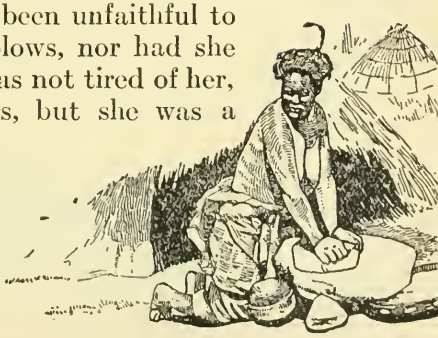
MANY STRIPES

The brutal infliction of bodily injury upon women by beating or otherwise has been the order of Islam ever since the Prophet himself permitted his victorious soldiers to do as they pleased with the women they chanced to meet in the course of their bloody conquests.

The Koran not only permits wife-beating, but the method of its application and the limitations are therein distinctly set forth. Mohammedan men have always taken full advantage of the license granted, and accordingly have Mohammedan women suffered. For any reason, or no reason, may a woman be so punished.

E. Alexander Powell, of the American consular service in Egypt, relates an incident in this connection which needs no comment:

"A wealthy Arab from the interior of Oran, starting on a journey to the capital of that province, bade the wife whom he adored an affectionate goodbye. Returning several days before he was expected, he seized the smiling woman who rushed to greet him, tied her hands, and dragging her into the street gave her a furious beating in the presence of the astounded neighbors. No, she had not been unfaithful to him, he said, between the blows, nor had she been unkind. He not only was not tired of her, so he assured the onlookers, but she was a



veritable jewel of a wife. Finally, when his arm grew tired and he stopped to take breath, he explained that passing through a street in Oran, he had seen a crowd following a man who was being dragged along by the gendarmes. Upon inquiry he learned that he was being taken to prison for beating his wife. Therefore he had ridden home at top speed, without even waiting to complete his business, that he might prove to himself, to his wife, and to the neighbors, that he, at least, was still master in his own house, and could beat his wife when he chose."

Oran is in North Africa — so are Algiers and Tunis!

"Woman's rights" in North Africa will require little space for description. They are simply to render to her husband absolute and unquestioning obedience. Marriage is founded largely upon sensuality, rarely upon affection, and the arrangement practically shackles the wife with the chains of life-long slavery.

HIDDEN LIVES

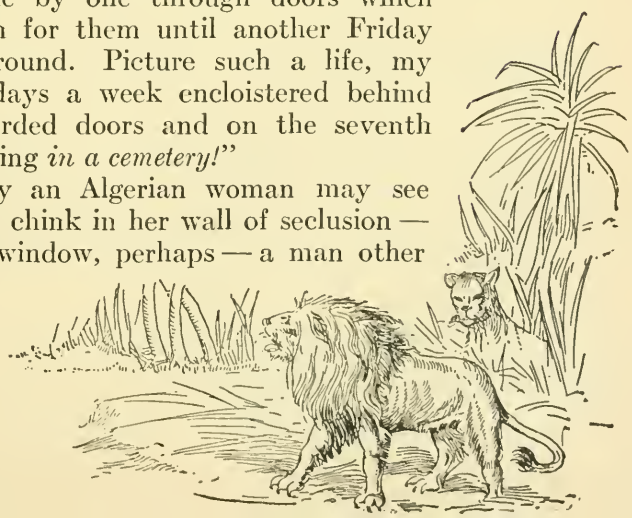
It is this sort of woman whose sad, despairing, unintelligent eyes, set deep in her pallid face, haunt you after you have made the rounds with a missionary in Algiers. So she lives, this woman, far removed from where the currents of real life flow — to stagnate mentally, morally

and physically, and to be tragically old long before her time.

Her one hilarious diversion is indulged in when on a Friday, the Moslem prayer day, she may, with other ghosts of women like herself, take her veiled way to the cemetery. This excursion is the exclusive outing for many of the women of Algerian coast towns, and of it one writer observes:

"You can see them for yourself any Friday afternoon if you will loiter about the white-washed gateway to the cemetery of Bou-Kabrin, on the hill above Algiers, for they believe that on that day — the Moslem Sabbath — the spirits of the dead revisit the earth; hence their weekly pilgrimage to the cemetery to keep them company. When the sun begins to sink behind the Atlas, these white-veiled pyramids of femininity reluctantly begin to make their way back through the narrow, winding lanes of the native city, disappearing one by one through doors which will not open for them until another Friday has rolled around. Picture such a life, my friends: six days a week encloistered behind jealously guarded doors and on the seventh taking an outing *in a cemetery!*"

Occasionally an Algerian woman may see through some chink in her wall of seclusion — some lattice window, perhaps — a man other



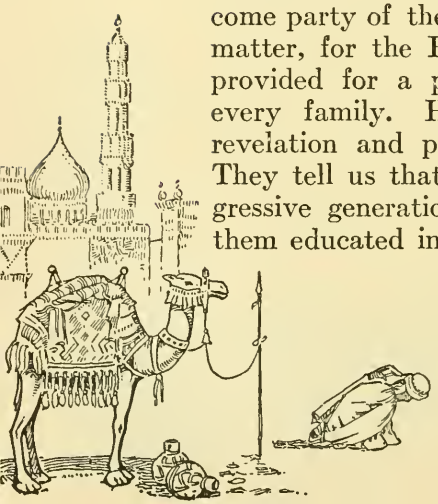
than her husband. Certainly no man — in some cases not even her father or brother — may see her except by the permission of her husband.

A secluded woman must be very ill indeed before a physician will be summoned. Under such circumstances, in some localities, great preparations are made, the unfortunate patient, in case her pulse must be felt, being almost suffocated with bed clothes in the effort to hide all of her except a bit of her wrist.

This well-authenticated story hails from Tunis. The favorite wife of a wealthy Arab merchant being ill, the French physician was called. While he pursued professional inquiries which would make his diagnosis of some value in treating the patient, the careful husband stood behind him with the muzzle of a revolver pressed into the small of his back!

POLYGAMY, CHILD MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

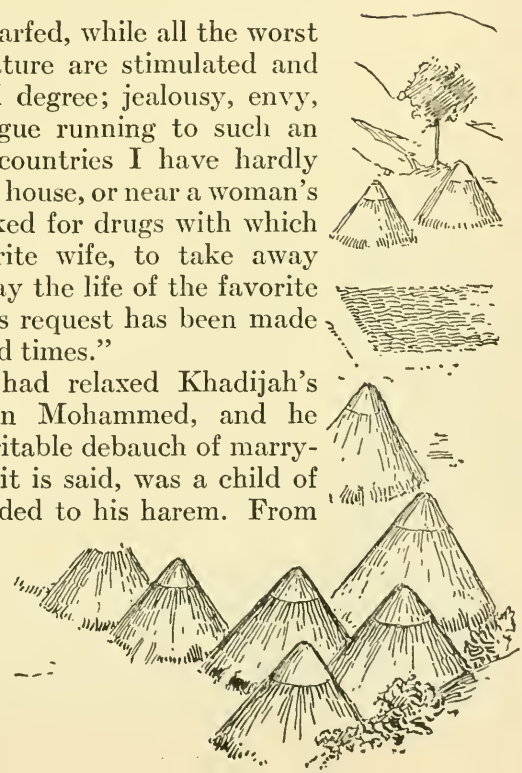
Millions of Mohammedan women have become party of the fourth part in the marriage matter, for the Prophet of Mecca generously provided for a possible quartet of wives in every family. His own harem, by special revelation and permission, numbered twelve. They tell us that the younger and more progressive generation of his followers, many of them educated in France, are ashamed of the



abominable system. They argue that the Prophet permitted four wives per man only in case he could love them equally and treat them impartially. The fact that this is obviously impossible, they aver, makes such permission null and void.

But the clock which may sometime strike the hour of doom for polygamy has not yet been wound, and women, victims of its frightful consequences, still suffer wherever Islam holds them in its grip. Isabella Bird Bishop suggests in a vivid fashion the partial outgrowth of such a diabolical system when she says:

"The intellect is dwarfed, while all the worst passions of human nature are stimulated and developed in a fearful degree; jealousy, envy, murderous hate, intrigue running to such an extent that in some countries I have hardly ever been in a woman's house, or near a woman's tent without being asked for drugs with which to disfigure the favorite wife, to take away her life, or to take away the life of the favorite wife's infant son. This request has been made to me over two hundred times."



As soon as death had relaxed Khadijah's restraining hand upon Mohammed, and he had plunged into a veritable debauch of marrying, his favorite wife, it is said, was a child of nine when she was added to his harem. From

that day, child marriage in Moslem lands has been the fiendish fashion.

Our missionaries in Algiers know but too well what this horrible and inhuman custom means, as demonstrated in the lives of the Moslem girls in their classes in the native town. In the plasticity of childhood they are intellectually as responsive as other children. Some are keen almost to uncanniness. Who under similar circumstances could have given a better answer to one of our missionaries than a little Moslem girl? Having been naughty just at Christmas time, she was asked: "Why do you sadden the dear Lord Jesus just at the time of his birthday?" Looking quickly up the child replied: "Lala Emily, it's just like the girl (Eve) who took the fruit. The devil tempted her and she took it and ate it. Well, I am naughty. I don't know why!"

All too soon are the sweet young faces missed from the girls' classes and the missionary must write in her journal: "They leave us young, often at the age of eleven or twelve, when they are shut up preparatory to marriage."

Only a few hours in the week for so pitifully short a time, then the heavy door of seclusion swings shut and the Moslem girl is indeed "hidden." Yet the ideals which she carries into her new home and the love of the Master which unseen enters with her, make a sweeter, more

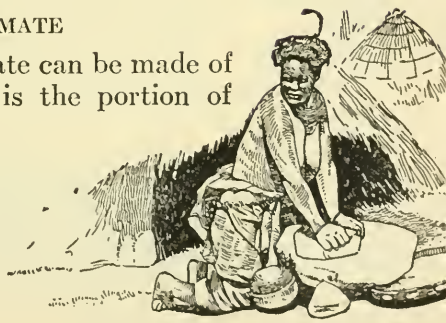
wholesome dwelling. "Even their Moslem husbands respect them more," is the comment of the missionaries.

And as if all this were not enough to fill to overflowing the Moslem woman's cup of woe, into this marital muddle enters another factor to make her misery doubly miserable — divorce. Forever it hangs over her head; forever she fears it; forever she will suffer all things at the hands of her husband to avoid it.

In the Methodist sphere of Moslem missions along the Mediterranean, as throughout the Moslem world, severing the marriage bond is but a slight operation, done with much facility and little publicity. It is simply a matter of repudiation of the wife by the husband. Possibly he has grown tired of her — of her looks, of her temper. Possibly he simply wishes to fill her place with another, and so he tells her to go, and she goes. If she has children they are left behind to the doubtful mercies of other wives who may succeed her. Time after time she may be remarried and divorced, falling a degree in the social scale with each succeeding marriage. No wonder, if despised and abused, that she is likely to die of old age at forty.

A WOMAN'S ESTIMATE

No true or adequate estimate can be made of the measure of woe which is the portion of



Moslem womanhood. Possibly no more convincing final word can be said than that of one of them who spoke from her heart to a missionary, the incident being related by Dr. H. K. Kumm. Quite a little crowd of women were seated around her as she sat in the house of a rich Bey, reading to them out of the Scriptures. Suddenly the chief wife stood up: "What is that to us? We are only women! Why do you not go to the men with this religion, this teaching, this book? There is no Paradise for us. We are like cattle; when we die we are gone. We have no souls." Dr. Kumm adds: "The very idea that they are human beings has been driven out of them. And these are our sisters!"

Can anything be done against such odds? Our workers are proving, even with the inadequate means at hand, that some things — some things — can be done. The idle fingers are being taught to ply the needle in the making of useful garments. The native lace-making is likewise learned. They are taught to sing the songs about "Jesus and his love." It is pitiful singing — the kind that makes you want to creep off somewhere and cry your eyes out — but they sing it in their homes after the missionary has gone, and their little children hear it.

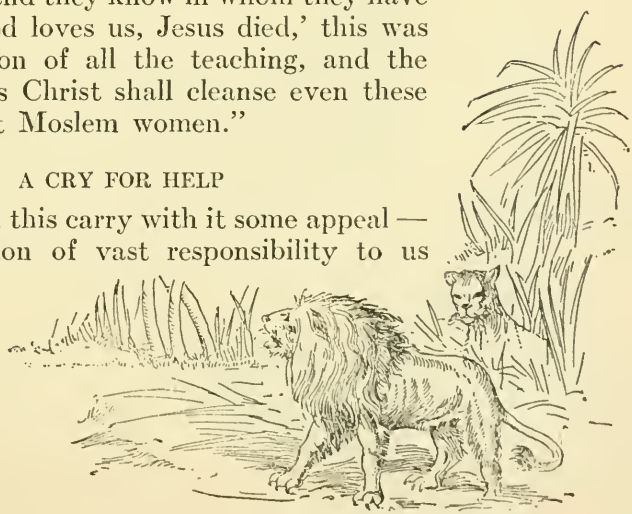
Possibly the sluggish minds do fall short of comprehension of many things which the patient missionary tries to teach them, but

some truths even they grasp, thank God! Listen:

"I went to our women's class a few days ago. I sat on the cushion among them with my accordion lying idly across my knees. I asked them to repeat the hymns, texts and lessons they had been taught. Forty pathetic, brown-eyed, weary-looking women gathered around me, and one after the other these poor ignorant souls sought to recall the lessons learned — but hymns, texts, stories, all — *all* began and finished in the same way! 'God loves us, he sent the Lord Jesus (Sidna Aisa) to give his life for us — we must follow not with our lips but with our hearts and he will take us to himself at the last.' Useless to remind them of stories told from the Old Testament, of miracles or parables. Their lives have been lived closed in by high walls, and in windowless rooms. They know no other school; their minds are all but blanks, but — and it makes it *all* worth while — the Holy Spirit of God has penetrated the darkness and they know in whom they have believed. 'God loves us, Jesus died,' this was the culmination of all the teaching, and the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse even these poor, ignorant Moslem women."

A CRY FOR HELP

Does not all this carry with it some appeal — some conviction of vast responsibility to us

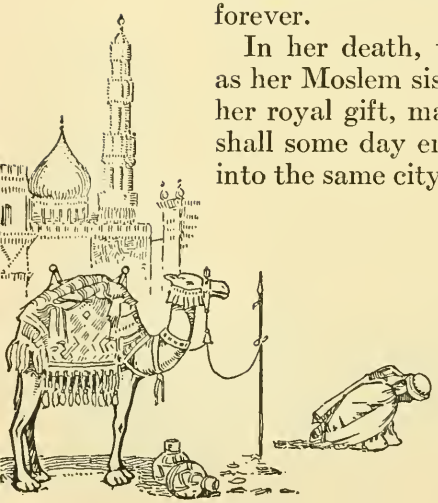


American women? The most favored, as we are under God, of all the women in the world — does not the call of the Moslem woman in North Africa for whose salvation, physical and spiritual, we alone are responsible, strike us dumb with pity, and conscious of our negligence, startle us into action?

One of us there was — a child of God blessed with gold which she loved only as she could use it for his glory. And one day across the seas and into her heart, swept from North Africa upon the leaden wings of its own sorrow, came the cry of the Moslem women. The very springs of her loving sympathy were touched, and the heart and the treasure of Francesca Nast Gamble were forever enlisted in the cause that should make for their relief and salvation.

But, having struck the chord of the music of her life, the Master Musician knew that he needed it for the heavenly symphony. The gates of the city swung open one day, and the gentle spirit we loved entered, to go out no more forever.

In her death, the woman whom she owned as her Moslem sister was not forgotten, and by her royal gift, many of them, too, please God, shall some day enter in through the same gate into the same city.



CHAPTER V

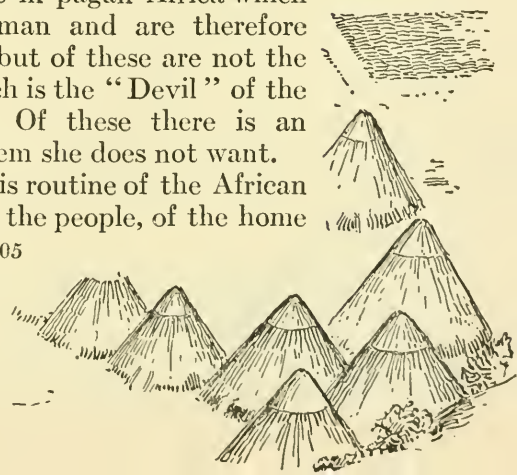
The Woman in Black

THAT most ancient triumvirate, the World, the Flesh and the Devil, is represented in the Bulu man, according to Miss Mackenzie in "An African Trail," by "the lust of Gain, the lust of Women and the yoke of Fetish."

To the woman who has opened her eyes to as much of creation as can be observed by the circumscribed, brown-smoked limits of an African hut, come also though in a different guise those three, the World, the Flesh and the Devil. To her the "World" is the community — the kraal of beehive habitations, if you please. The "Flesh"— no figure of speech is here, understand — is that of her husband, her family, herself. The things which concern these are centered under the thatched roof of her hut.

Things there may be in pagan Africa which are cornered by the man and are therefore taboo for womankind, but of these are not the "things of fetish," which is the "Devil" of the aforesaid triumvirate. Of these there is an over-supply, and for them she does not want.

Is it not, after all, this routine of the African woman — the things of the people, of the home

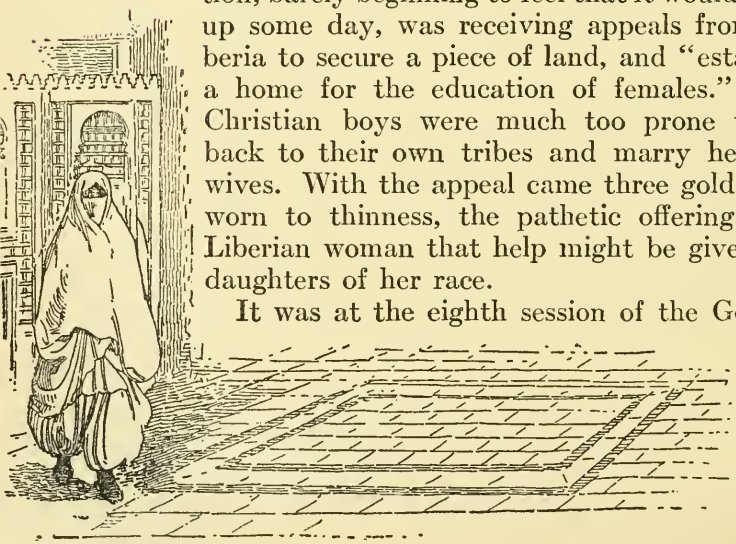


and of God — much after the fashion of our own life? But for God, the African woman worships a devil.

In the matters of God and of home and of community must that woman minister, who goes to Africa to give the upward lift to some other woman's life. The records will prove that in all of these things our workers have been faithful, and where they toiled, even in years agone, there have arisen black-skinned women to call them blessed. But the workers were then, and are now, all too few.

A HUMBLE BEGINNING

True, as long ago as 1877 the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was doing something for Africa, but it was a small and feeble effort, the maintaining of that one little day school in Liberia. Even then the new organization, barely beginning to feel that it would grow up some day, was receiving appeals from Liberia to secure a piece of land, and "establish a home for the education of females." The Christian boys were much too prone to go back to their own tribes and marry heathen wives. With the appeal came three gold rings worn to thinness, the pathetic offering of a Liberian woman that help might be given the daughters of her race.



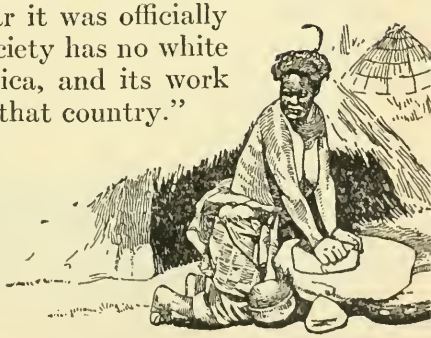
It was at the eighth session of the General

Executive Committee, in 1877, that this call was received, and the hope expressed that what Africa had missed by the apparent neglect of her by the church might in the near future be made up, our Society having a part in such service.

Then followed during the years other sessions of the General Executive Committee, when needs of the Dark Continent were pictured by those who had seen them and knew whereof they spoke. To such appeals sympathy was evidently not lacking, for from time to time appropriations of varying sums for work there were made. The treasury was never drawn upon for some of these amounts, as woman's work in that day in the mission established by our church was little more than prospective.

Later, occasional efforts were made with some definiteness to begin work under the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in this field. Two missionaries were supported at different times. Little success, however, was attained, and no permanent results followed.

The plain fact is, distasteful though it be, that after all the lavish outpouring of lives in Liberia, up to 1883 Africa had been too much for Methodism. In that year it was officially announced: "The Parent Society has no white missionary at present in Africa, and its work has been greatly lessened in that country."



UNDER THE PORTUGUESE FLAG

It was not until sixteen years later, in 1899, that the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society again entered Africa — this time to stay. In that year, a building having been erected previously by Bishop Taylor for a girls' training school at Quessua, Angola, Miss Cora Zentmire and Miss Josephine Mekkelson took up their quarters there and to the joy of the Society their mission school bell rang once more for dark-skinned children.

Whatever may now be said of Quessua's being beautiful for situation, in 1900 it was called "a field as lonely as could be imagined — in the heart of Africa, surrounded by serpents, hyenas and other wild beasts." Not especially promising for the contemplation of a prospective missionary candidate!

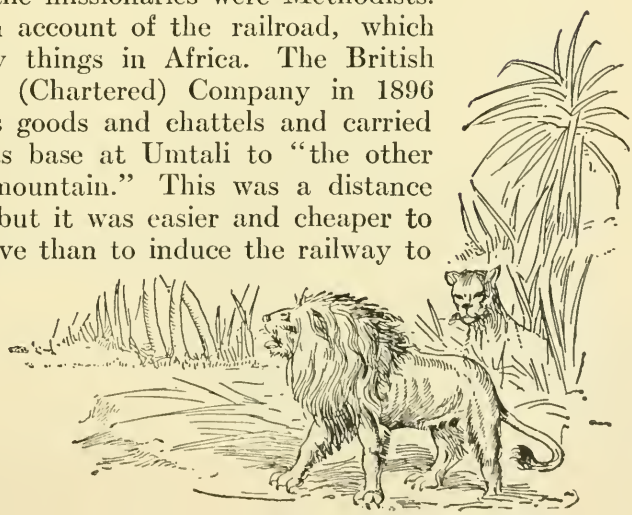
But steel tracks and white men and governmental policies and mission stations all make their impression upon a missionary landscape in Africa, and Quessua, no matter what the complexion of its people, carries a black name no longer. The school there under the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society is but six miles from the town of Malange, with a population of over three thousand, where our church has a mission press and school. Although located back from the coast some three hundred miles, a railroad threads it up with Loanda, the

capital of this Portuguese state, and a mountain elevation of more than five thousand feet above sea level affords a more secure defense against fever.

The working base is the school itself, overcrowded just now with girls who are soon to go out from it as Christian wives and Bible women. Very practical industrial arts are taught along with the Bible and schoolbooks. Africa must first know spiritual redemption, but a long stride toward this end will be redemption also from just *dirt*. "Spotless Town" is never to be located upon the map of untouched paganism.

A MISSIONARY FAIRY TALE

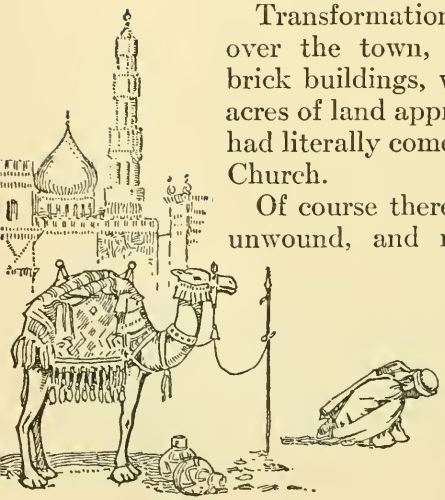
Who in all the world before ever heard of a ready-made town handed over to missionaries for their very own? This isn't a fairy story — it's the honest truth, and the town is Old Umtali, in Rhodesia, over which flies the Union Jack — and the missionaries were Methodists. It was all on account of the railroad, which decides many things in Africa. The British South Africa (Chartered) Company in 1896 picked up its goods and chattels and carried them from its base at Umtali to "the other side of the mountain." This was a distance of ten miles but it was easier and cheaper to make the move than to induce the railway to



clamber over to Umtali. This circumstance left a perfectly good little four-year-old town standing all by itself with no one to walk on its streets or look out of its windows. Cecil Rhodes is even yet a name to conjure with in Africa. It was in 1896, when he was asked what could ever be done with that forsaken, lonesome little Umtali, that with far vision this great man said, "Make a mission of it." So, as the fairy story might put it, just then along came our Bishop Hartzell, "proper 'merican bishopy-man," his carriers called him, and he said, "I'll make Umtali into a mission for you," and with the help of some other folks that is just what he did.

The jail was turned into a schoolhouse; the magistrate's office into one for the doctor; the courthouse hardly knew itself as the hospital, and the barroom of the hotel, when the mission boys appropriated it for their dining room, gave up entirely and never thought of being a barroom again.

Transformations like these sprouted out all over the town, till every one of its twelve brick buildings, with the town-site and twelve acres of land approximating a value of $75,000, had literally come into the Methodist Episcopal Church.



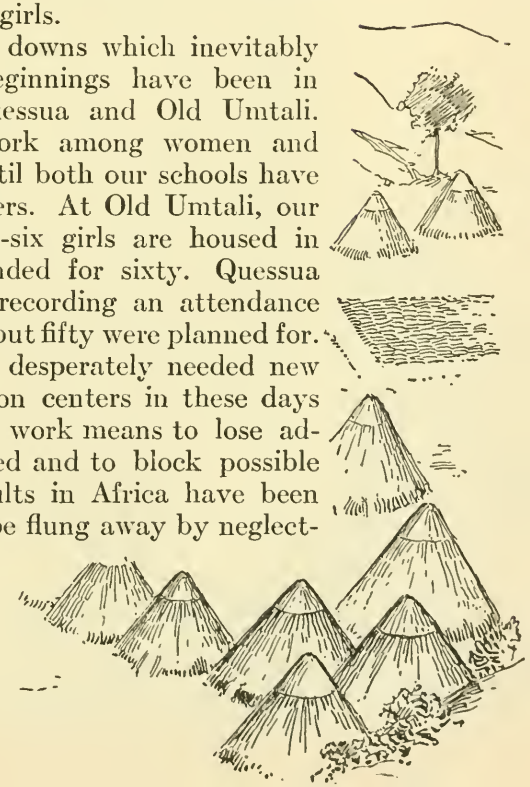
Of course there was any amount of red tape unwound, and much time consumed during

the proceedings of transfer, and while little Umtali was rather ridiculously changing its name to "*Old* Umtali," but all that is not of so much concern.

The important development for our work arose when a charming bungalow, less than a mile from the center of things, and up on the mountain side, with thirty-five acres of land, was deeded over to the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.

Upon the day in 1905 when "Hartzell Villa," our hillside bungalow, was finally transferred to the Society by Bishop Hartzell, our school work began with nine girls.

The usual ups and downs which inevitably attend missionary beginnings have been in evidence in both Quessua and Old Umtali. Despite these the work among women and girls has expanded until both our schools have outgrown their quarters. At Old Umtali, our largest center, ninety-six girls are housed in accommodations intended for sixty. Quessua echoes the story by recording an attendance of sixty housed where but fifty were planned for.



Not to provide for desperately needed new buildings and extension centers in these days of rapid growth of the work means to lose advantages already gained and to block possible future progress. Results in Africa have been too dearly bought to be flung away by neglect-

ing to make them serve as the foundation for larger and more far-reaching efforts for its redemption.

It is gratifying to note in connection with the growth of the work of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, that there have recently been five young women who have volunteered for service in this needy field. Plans whereby work formerly carried by the Society in Inhambane in Portuguese East Africa shall be reopened are already under way, probably to result there in a new boarding school.

It is repeatedly said, and experience would seem to confirm the truth of the opinion, that Africa must be evangelized by Africans. This being true, the Society is on the line of right procedure as on the staff of its workers in this field it numbers two women of that race — Susan Collins and Martha Drummer at Quessua, both having gone out from the United States.

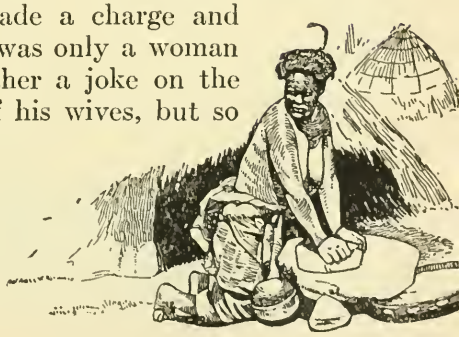
Such in outline is the work of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in pagan Africa — a mere beginning in a vast field. The entrance into it by our missionaries opens to us a door through which we, too, may see the dusky figures of women and children among whom they move.

THE WOMAN OF THE BUSH

Just now it shall be the pagan woman whom we shall follow through her days, whose routine

is covered by the things of her Hut, the things of her Community, and the things of Worship. While it is true that the pagan woman of Southern Africa has a thousandfold more of physical freedom than her Moslem sister in our North African field, "her liberty," writes a missionary from the West Coast, "is the liberty of the beast to its burden, and the slave to her task." Although conditions of her social life vary among different tribes, everywhere she is put under the ban as a thing vastly inferior. The Rev. John M. Springer in a journey through the Congo region came upon an incident conclusively demonstrating this fact. He says:

"While we were waiting upon the bank a woman came down in a state of great excitement, shrieking and gesticulating in a most alarming manner. The chief listened and at first assumed an expression of tragic horror, when shortly he clapped his hands over his mouth and began to laugh. I was relieved at that, and when some of our carriers began to understand they laughed. I inquired into it and learned that this woman and the others of the kraal had been working in their gardens when a lion had boldly made a charge and carried one of them off. It was only a woman that was taken. It was rather a joke on the husband thus to lose one of his wives, but so

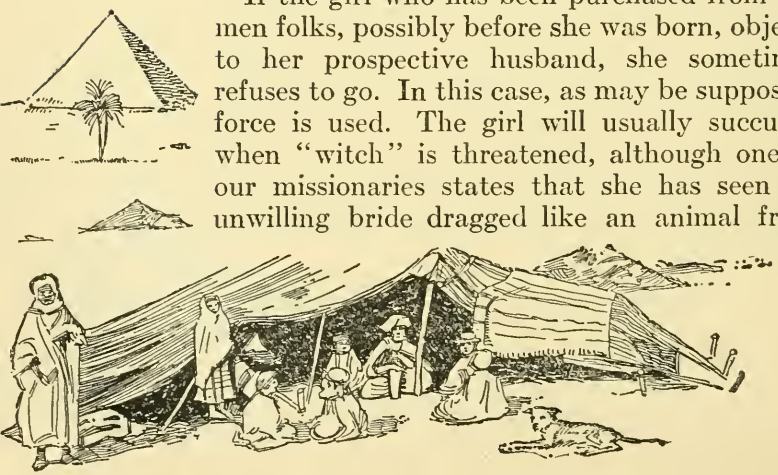


cheaply is human life, and especially woman life, held, that it meant no more to most of them than the news that a goat had been eaten. Nor was there any move toward a possible rescue, although the woman was evidently urging it."

BUYING A BRIDE

Since she has a market value, differing in various parts of the country, of cloth, brass wire, chickens, goats or oxen, the birth of a daughter is not mourned among the people of the kraals. Her father looks forward to the day when by her sale the family revenues will be increased. This buying of wives constitutes the only wedding ceremony. Festivities there may be to celebrate the event by the friends of the bride in the kraal which she leaves, or in that to which she goes. The wife-buying custom has been in vogue forever and a day, and in reality is about the only part of the nuptial arrangement which gives any sort of permanency to the marriage contract.

If the girl who has been purchased from her men folks, possibly before she was born, objects to her prospective husband, she sometimes refuses to go. In this case, as may be supposed, force is used. The girl will usually succumb when "witch" is threatened, although one of our missionaries states that she has seen an unwilling bride dragged like an animal from



her kraal, by the husband, who for the purpose had fastened about her neck a twisted cord made from the bark of the baobab tree.

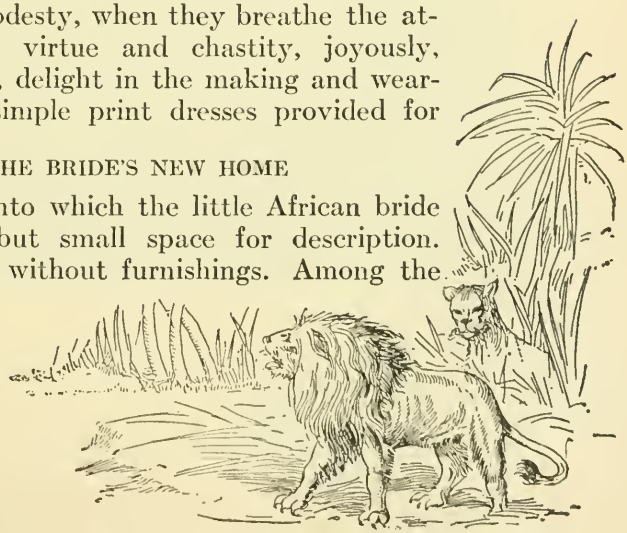
The trousseau of the bride is very simple, so simple that it scarcely affords a basis for description. A loin-cloth of skin or cotton fabric, a few bracelets of copper wire, her head shaved in a fantastic fashion, with some blue beads by way of ornament — and the bride is dressed.

The missionaries grow eloquent over the beauty, suppleness and grace of carriage of the lithe young body of the little black bride. They shake their heads sadly when they tell of its frequent cruel disfigurement by tattooing, or the insertion under the satin skin of bits of charcoal or other foreign substance which produce certain welt-like patterns.

They assure us, too, that the girls who come to our schools straight from the native kraals, unclad and, because of their pagan ignorance, devoid of modesty, when they breathe the atmosphere of virtue and chastity, joyously, even eagerly, delight in the making and wearing of the simple print dresses provided for them.

THE BRIDE'S NEW HOME

The hut into which the little African bride goes takes but small space for description. It is almost without furnishings. Among the

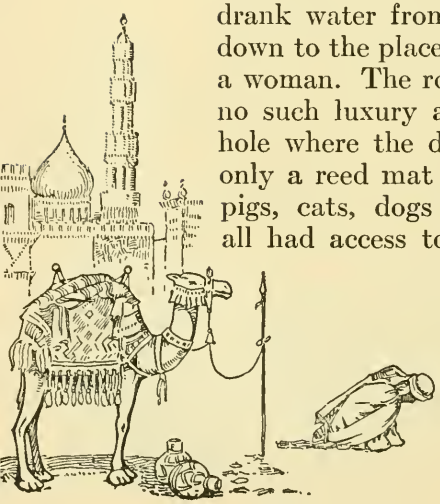


tribes visited by some of our workers there are not even the crude stools or beds which are sometimes found. The inevitable mat of reeds on which to rest their bones serves also, hung over the hole-like door, to keep out the rain.

The fire, always either burning brightly or smouldering, never being allowed to go out, occupies a space in the center of the floor of hard-pounded earth. The smoke may make its exit as best it may, or it may remain in the hut, which it mostly does, greatly to the discomfort of the family. The dishes or other utensils, except for the clay cooking kettles, are minus.

Miss Drummer writes of one such stopping place on an evangelistic itinerary:

"I had hammock carriers and went about eighteen or twenty miles to the south of us among the people in a nest of large villages. I reached Kalunga on Thanksgiving Day. No turkey on the menu! These villages are near the Quiz River, so famous for crocodiles. I drank water from the river and made a visit down to the place where one of them had killed a woman. The room of the hut I lived in had no such luxury as a door or a window. The hole where the door should be was there but only a reed mat was put up at night. Goats, pigs, cats, dogs and my neighbors' children all had access to my room through the day.



Miss Drummer's Haystack Prayer Meeting

Little things like these did not disturb me so long as my food box was locked. Two girls from the crocodile country came back with me to the school."

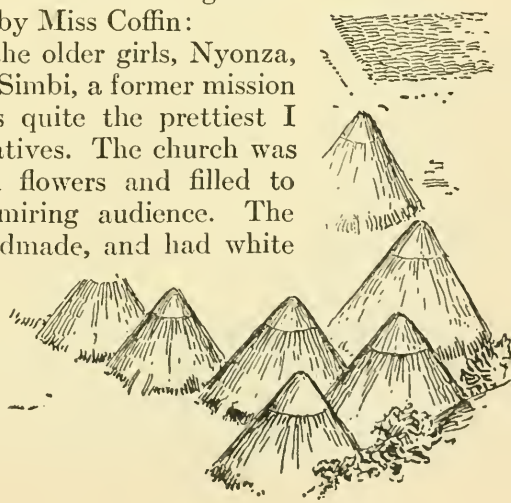
Polygamy is universally practiced. Indeed a man's social status so far as his earthly goods are concerned is measured by the number of his wives. Miss Edith Bell, for four years one of our church missionaries in Africa, visited in the village of one chief who had thirty-three wives, while another only two days' journey away had eighty-four. A few of these surplus wives are usually kept at the chief's headquarters in huts of their own, and the rest distributed in other villages over which he rules.

Into such conditions as these goes the little new African wife, probably already besmirched by paganism's foul touch.

A CONTRAST IN BRIDES

Contrast with such a picture the account of the wedding of one of our Christian girls at Old Umtali as reported by Miss Coffin:

"One of the best of the older girls, Nyonza, was recently married to Simbi, a former mission boy. Her wedding was quite the prettiest I have seen among the natives. The church was prettily decorated with flowers and filled to the doors with an admiring audience. The bride wore a dress, handmade, and had white



flowers in her hair. Moyogotswa and Zweripede acted as bridesmaids, and we had quite an exciting time getting them ready. A study in black and white they made after the dressing process was completed, as they stood in solemn silence surveying one another while waiting for Simbi and his friends to arrive. Simbi's face was shining with soap and happiness. Just as the procession filed into the church Moyogotswa threw a vivid pink scarf over her shoulders. This scarf she had carefully concealed on the way down to the church from the possibly disapproving eyes of the others, until it was too late for expostulation. The unexpected appearance of such grandeur caused some confusion among the bridal party, so when they reached the altar not the bride but the bridesmaid stood by Simbi; and the pastor, not being familiar with the faces of the girls, began to marry Simbi to the wrong one! To this, however, Simbi emphatically objected. The girls changed places and the ceremony proceeded."

This girl and her husband went out to establish a new home, not in a filthy hut but, though lowly, a Christian habitation, that savor of life unto life in a pagan community.

Marriage and giving in marriage are no uncommon events in our schools; certainly no better work can we do than to train the girls

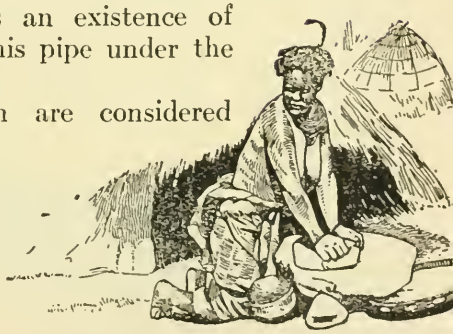
who come to be Christian home-makers. Such lamps set by them in the deep gloom of Africa's night are sending far out into the bush long paths of light in which others, too, may walk.

Miss Clark writes: "Some of the girls marry teachers and we are especially glad when they have the opportunity to help the people that way. Those who do not marry teachers have Christian husbands anyway. Many of these girls teach sewing and help in Sunday school and in personal work among the people."

IN THE SWEAT OF HER FACE

The work of the non-Christian African wife is cut out and awaiting her arrival. To catalogue her activities would be to list all of the back-breaking, heart-crushing forms of manual labor known in the Dark Continent. So far as the system of family support here is concerned, as contrasted with that in vogue in Africa, the shoe is entirely upon the other foot. There the women perform all the labor by which the husband and the children are supported. Beyond contributing the minimum of assistance when the time of the cutting of various garden crops is on, missionaries declare that the head of the African hut spends an existence of idyllic do-lessness, smoking his pipe under the shade of some friendly tree.

That these poor women are considered



valuable only as they can bend their necks to bear the seemingly unbearable yoke of life's burdens is incontrovertible. As an example of reducing their value to an exact mathematical calculation the case of a certain chief might be cited. Seeing a plow for the first time as it ripped up the earth preparatory to planting, he exclaimed: "Why, that is a wonderful thing! It can do more in a day than ten wives!"

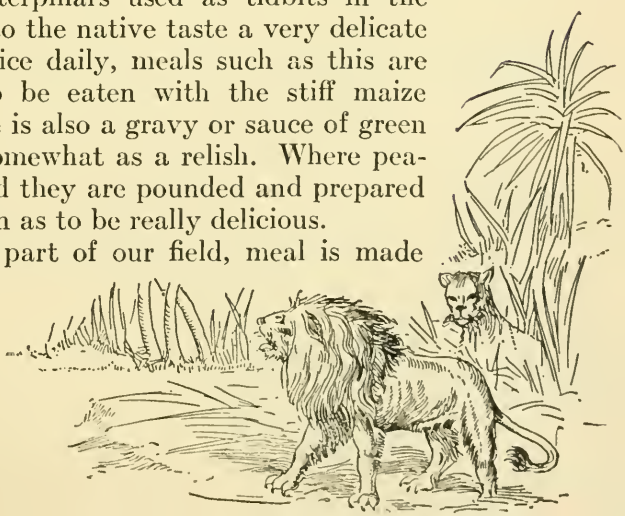
"Plow" indeed these women do, scratching the earth a bit, and scattering the seed broadcast. A missionary who taught some of our girls to plant the maize in hills was politely smiled at, while they whispered to each other, "She will soon be asking us to count the grains we plant in each hill!" Often the gardens are several miles from the hut, and to these the women trudge in the rainy season, with their babies on their backs. With short-handled hoes they cultivate the vegetables or grain, working vigorously up and down and in the process almost joggling the poor little black babies' heads off.

The loads they carry upon their heads, baskets of vegetables, jars of water, bundles of firewood and the like, are almost incredible. But in compensation therefor the native woman has an ease and grace of carriage which it is said would be the envy of My Lady in America.

AN AFRICAN LARDER

No housewife's calendar of menus hangs in this woman's kitchen. There is no kitchen, and between her and her neighbor there is no rivalry in the preparation of new and tasty dishes. For it is the same old thing both women cook for the two meals of the day, year in and year out. The grain most used where our missionary girls are at work is maize. This breakfast food and dinner as well, however, far from coming in a germ-proof package, a premium coupon perhaps lurking within, must be literally prepared by the housewife from the ground up. The sowing, the harvesting, the pounding in a mortar, the cooking, are all the labor of her own hands. The finished product of this combination of meal and water, cooked in the clay kettle over the hut fire, is a thick variety of corn-meal mush, ordinarily without salt, because salt in Africa is scarce. I have it upon the word of one of our missionaries, that a few beetles or caterpillars used as tidbits in the "sadza" are to the native taste a very delicate addition. Twice daily, meals such as this are prepared. To be eaten with the stiff maize porridge there is also a gravy or sauce of green herbs, used somewhat as a relish. Where peanuts are raised they are pounded and prepared in such fashion as to be really delicious.

In another part of our field, meal is made

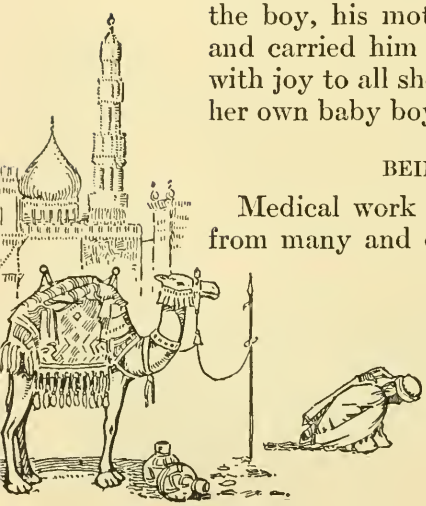


from the cassava root, after soaking and drying it, and Dr. Springer, who with his wife in the course of long itineraries has actually lived upon porridge made of this, says: "When cooked it resembles thick minute pudding, but has the color and the consistency of India rubber, and a decidedly sour taste."

There is no family table here. Our workers see the native men dipping their fingers into the common kettle, and the women, who never eat with the men, doing likewise as their turn comes.

There is so much that is of the earth earthy in the life of these women, so much that is intertwined with sex and sensuality, that we hear with distinct relief from our missionaries that even out from such depths as these conditions produce, the fair flower of the love of a mother for her child may rise and blossom.

The story is told of a little child taken by his father to a mission school, who never saw his mother again until he visited his native kraal at the age of sixteen. To the utter chagrin of the boy, his mother took him upon her back and carried him through the town, explaining with joy to all she met, that "Twooh" was still her own baby boy and had come back to her.



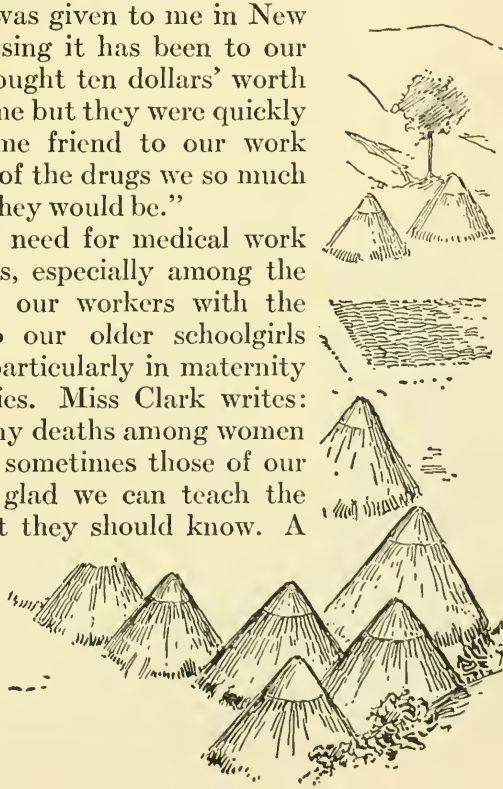
BEING MADE WHOLE

Medical work among the women who suffer from many and dreadful diseases is absolutely

indispensable. All our workers must have some knowledge of medicine and the administration of simple remedies, as they move among these childlike folks, for our organization has upon its staff in Africa no medical missionary. One of the missionaries writing on this phase of the work says:

"Somehow the people have associated the gospel message with the healing of the sick. In every village and hut where I go they are begging me for medicine. My heart is pained when they bring their babies to me for help and I have nothing to help them with. Five years ago a peck of quinine was given to me in New York, and what a blessing it has been to our family and many! I bought ten dollars' worth of medicines when I came but they were quickly exhausted. I wish some friend to our work would contribute some of the drugs we so much need. What a blessing they would be."

Such pitiful, terrible need for medical work as is found on all sides, especially among the women, has impressed our workers with the necessity of giving to our older schoolgirls some simple training, particularly in maternity cases and care of babies. Miss Clark writes: "Since there are so many deaths among women at this time, including sometimes those of our own old girls, we are glad we can teach the girls now with us what they should know. A

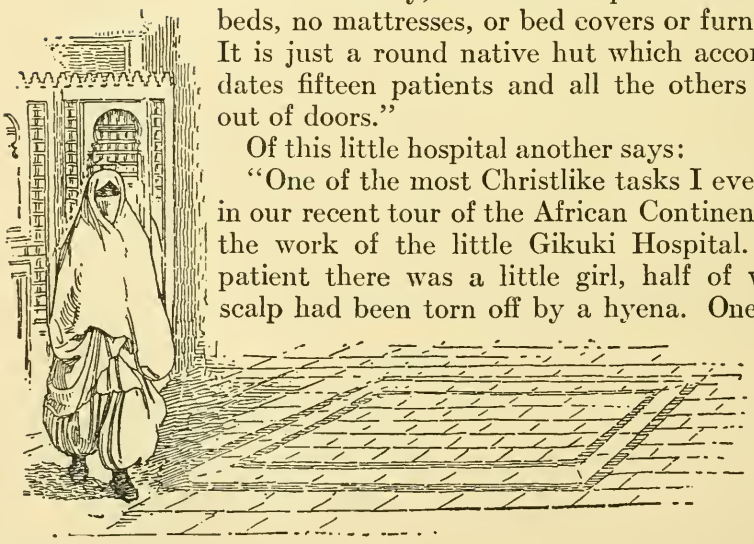


number of them can do good work for the women in the villages, now."

At all the mission stations operated by the Methodist Episcopal Church in Africa some medical work is being done. Granted our so-called hospitals and dispensaries may not measure up to the last scientific detail required for absolute efficiency of equipment, nevertheless, many of the people of the bush in them have found relief from pain, return to health and acquaintance with the Great Physician.

A recent writer in *Missionary News* (Board of Foreign Missions) throws upon the screen of our missionary vision this picture of one of our denominational "hospitals" at Gikuki, East Africa:

"It is not much to boast of in size, for its waiting room is all out of doors and its dispensary measures only sixteen feet square. It has no chimney, no floor except the earth, no beds, no mattresses, or bed covers or furniture. It is just a round native hut which accommodates fifteen patients and all the others sleep out of doors."



Of this little hospital another says:

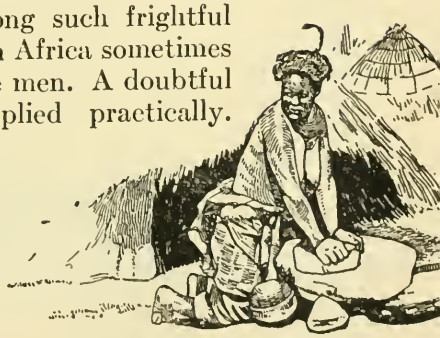
"One of the most Christlike tasks I ever saw in our recent tour of the African Continent was the work of the little Gikuki Hospital. One patient there was a little girl, half of whose scalp had been torn off by a hyena. One man

was covered with wounds and his assailants had tried to gouge out his eyes. Another was a leper. A month-old baby was covered with burns, having rolled into the fire on the floor of a native hut. This is the only hospital, and the two benign workers are the only medical missionaries, for over a million of people in that section of Africa. The missionary doctor at the head of this sixteen-foot-square hospital declined to be private physician to one American, however, at five thousand dollars a year — and is glad he went to Portuguese East Africa."

THE WOMAN IN BONDAGE

So in her home in the African bush stands this Woman in Black. Herself, her husband, her children, her home, her village — all demon-shackled. The loveliest things ever made by a beneficent Creator — a lacy cloud, a brilliant-feathered bird, a murmuring brook, even her own little child — may to her tortured imagination furnish only a place of abode for a devil bent upon her destruction. Surely such a system of hopeless, withering, soul-and-body-degrading bondage could emanate only from the very Prince of Devils himself.

It is true that even among such frightful conditions as these, women in Africa sometimes exercise great power over the men. A doubtful compliment this when applied practically.



Warriors have sometimes heeded the findings of a "woman palaver" on so great a question as war, giving as their reason for accepting the decision their belief that women, being by nature nearer the evil powers of the underworld, are therefore "more witch."

Occasionally a woman, by usurpation and intrigue, may rule a kraal, as was the case of Shikanga, in whose kraal in Rhodesia Mrs. Springer lived and worked for some time. But such instances as these are rare.

The real Woman in Black — she herself — is bowed to the earth with burdens, her eyes are upon the ground, and a legion of devils deride her. The pathetic appeal made by Africa's women to our missionaries — "Can we learn the way of the Lord in just one day?" — is freighted with despair and warning: despair at their own inability to learn so great a thing in the one brief visit of a missionary — possibly the sole visit in years, or in even a lifetime; a warning lest such faint murmurs for help across such vast distances of miles and civilizations, made by the very least of these his children, may not be heard by the women of Methodism.

"More than anything else which saddens me," writes one of our missionaries, "is the lack of religious work among women. At some places we found a strong church and a school for boys, but not a woman could be found that

could read, very little being done for them. It is not due to a lack of desire on their part. In most cases the native ministers realize that the people cannot be lifted while the mothers sit in darkness, and that they will never have a stable body of Christians until the women are taught to read and can have the Bible in their hands."

While the church waits, the crescent of Islam rises higher and higher over the dark forests of the dark people of Africa. Already whole tribes have been Islamized, and the way of the conqueror is the way of Mohammed. To the already insupportable burdens of the womanhood of Africa's desert and bush Islam would add also its leaden weight. Now the citadel of her heart may be easily taken for Jesus Christ. Mohammed's hold is difficult to loose.

CHAPTER VI

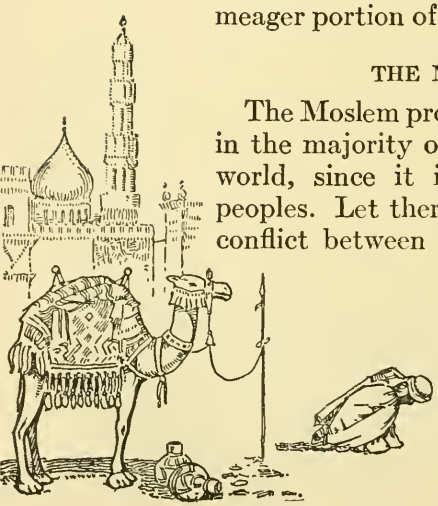
Little Lost Lambs

THUS far the slight attempts of the church at large to reach the Moslem children of the world seem to have placed it in somewhat the same situation as that of a certain ancient dame of wide reputation whose children were so numerous "she didn't know what to do!"

And numerous indeed are these hapless little wights whose infant feet are so firmly set in the way of Mohammed, which leadeth unto death eternal. The little children of the religion of Islam, who lisp the name of the false Prophet, are half as many as those who in Christian lands repeat the name of Jesus. In all there are eighty millions of Mohammedan children — one-eighth of the childhood of the world — to whom has been doled out a pitifully meager portion of Christian missionary effort.

THE MOSLEM PROBLEM

The Moslem problem today is still *the* problem in the majority of the unoccupied fields of the world, since it is largely the faith of their peoples. Let there be no uncertainty as to the conflict between Mohammedanism and Chris-

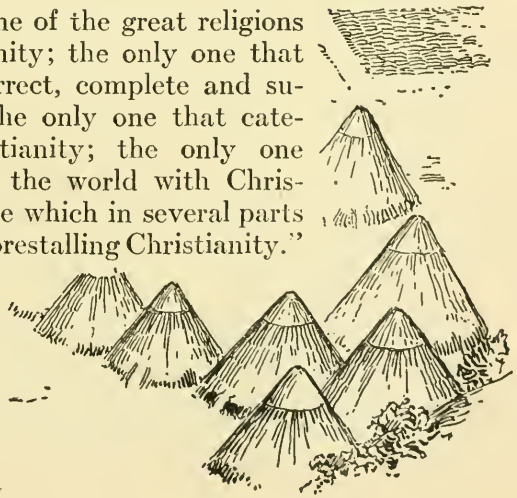


tianity. It is a very real conflict. The sword of the Prophet is still sharp on both edges, and throughout the whole non-Christian world, including the continent of Africa, it cuts an increasingly wide swath.

The Moslem menace is one of deep seriousness, and has an emphatic bearing upon the spread of Christian missions in every one of the great world fields. It is a sad comment upon us as Christians, that owing to the limitation of vision, of interest, of conviction upon this vital subject, there have followed as natural consequences, a lack of intelligence, as well as a lack of leaders, in the cause of the Cross against the Crescent.

Seriously to ponder the following summing up of the case of Christianity vs. Islam is to recognize the colossal dimensions of the latter, and to see that without the overcoming of the existing indifference and the addition of hosts of recruits we are well nigh impotent to handle the situation:

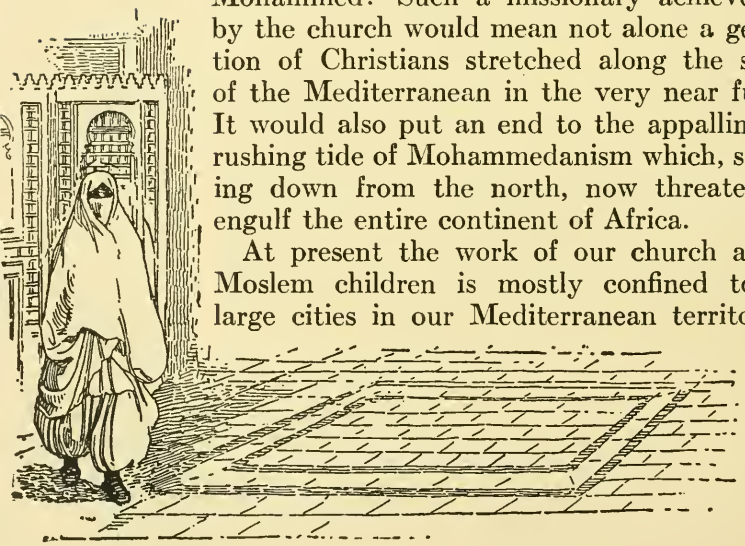
"Islam is the only one of the great religions to come after Christianity; the only one that definitely claims to correct, complete and supersede Christianity; the only one that categorically denies Christianity; the only one that seriously disputes the world with Christianity; and the only one which in several parts of the world is today forestalling Christianity."



VITAL POINT OF ATTACK

Where, then, in view of the strength of Islam, shall we find the vital point of contact, through which at some time the entire corrupt system shall be undermined and eventually totter to its fall? Unquestionably in the reaching and rescuing of the eighty millions of its children. If the bitter waters of life through Islam are to be healed, it must be at the beginnings of such life — its childhood.

Authentic figures place the number of children in Africa in Mohammedan homes north of the twentieth parallel, at eight million, five hundred thousand. This includes our Methodist North Africa sphere — Tripoli, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco — containing probably two-thirds of this entire number of Moslem boys and girls. A mighty dent would their speedy salvation inflict upon the armor of Mohammed! Such a missionary achievement by the church would mean not alone a generation of Christians stretched along the shores of the Mediterranean in the very near future. It would also put an end to the appalling onrushing tide of Mohammedanism which, sweeping down from the north, now threatens to engulf the entire continent of Africa.



At present the work of our church among Moslem children is mostly confined to the large cities in our Mediterranean territory —

Algiers, Constantine and Tunis. In all of these there are the town Arabs, and also the Kabyle children whose parents have come down from the mountains — or who in some instances have been brought from their highland homes by the missionary or native worker. All of these children, once in the big cities, are subject to the same conditions of life in the native quarters—conditions of absolute demoralization.

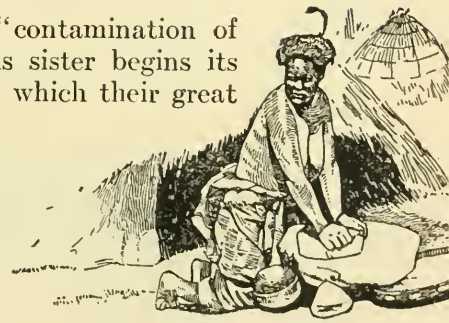
Dr. Edwin F. Frease, superintendent of Methodist Missions in North Africa, in speaking of the difficulty in securing native Arab and Kabyle preachers observes:

"Mohammedanism has the most disastrous effect on mentality, morals and character of any religion. The adult convert from it is not only difficult to assimilate and develop along spiritual lines, but the making of workers from among them is slow and very uncertain.

"The surest and in the end the quickest and most economical method is to get hold of the children before the contamination of Islamism has seized them in its fatal grip, and to bring them up as Christians, selecting the choice spirits among them for training as Christian workers."

THE SMIRCH OF ISLAM

Sad to relate, this foul "contamination of Islam" for the boy and his sister begins its deadly work in the home in which their great



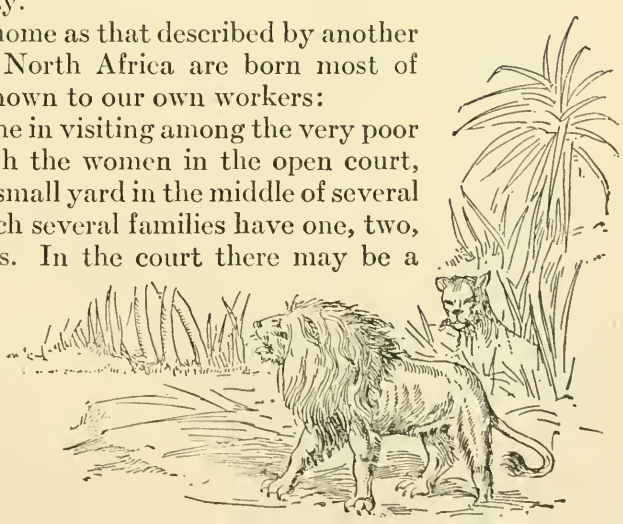
brown eyes first open to the light. Their very maternal heritage is a handicap from the start. Science demonstrates that what a child is likely to be depends much upon what his mother was before he knew her. But science has not so much as a bowing acquaintance with Islam. Science, unsought and unasked, does not stalk through the windowless walls of native houses.

Physically, then, Moslem babies come into the world most pitifully equipped. Infant mortality in Algeria alone climbs up to sixty per cent, while Morocco confesses to seventy-five per cent. A legion of ills which breed in the lack of all hygienic provisions in the home conditions is ever ready to pounce upon the little mites of humanity, and epidemics among them are frequent and to a great extent fatal. One medical missionary states what is too horribly true in most Moslem communities when he says: "The children die like flies. The weaklings all perish and only the hardy survive." Missionaries in Algiers and Tunis affirm that the children among whom they work are, with very few exceptions, tainted with unspeakable diseases. Another, writing from Morocco, says: "Immorality and frequency of divorce, with a total lack of hygiene combined with superstitious practices, have sapped the brains and constitutions of over eighty per cent of the children."

With the heartbreaking sight of little sick children ever in their eyes, and before lovely "Les Aiglons" up on the hill came into the possession of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, Miss Smith and Miss Welch took a cottage down by the blue sea. Here, out of the stifling heat and filth of the native town in Algiers, were gathered little, pale, ailing, hungry Moslem maids. First they came tremblingly. Then they went back to their own people again, this time wide-eyed with the very wonder of it all, to tell of "more than enough to eat, clean white 'nighties,' and songs about some wonderful being called Jesus who would never leave them, and would take them after awhile safe home to heaven." "Paradise, they called our home," writes the missionary, "and the garden of the Lord Jesus. More than one little child asked when they would *see* the Lord walking in his garden, not realizing that they met him often as we knelt to pray in the cool of the day."

Into such a home as that described by another missionary in North Africa are born most of the children known to our own workers:

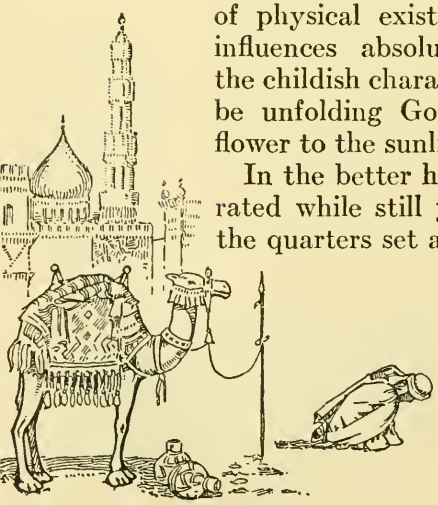
"Many a time in visiting among the very poor I have sat with the women in the open court, which is like a small yard in the middle of several houses, in which several families have one, two, or three rooms. In the court there may be a



dozen women, unwashed, uncombed, untidy to a degree; some breadmaking, some washing, others nursing their babies,— babies who are as sick and unhealthy as they can possibly be, their bodies ingrained with dirt, their eyes inflamed and uncleansed, one and all looking thoroughly ill and wretched. As I have sat among these women and talked with them I have tried to reason with them and point out the advantages of cleanliness and industry. All admit that I am right, that our habits are better than theirs, yet none have the heart, or the energy, or the character to break away from their customs and their innate laziness and to rise up and be women."

Far be it from American women upon their pinnacle of Christian privilege to blame these others when we consider the chance these daughters of Hagar have had!

Better homes than these there undoubtedly are among them but even here such influences prevail as to make precarious the beginnings of physical existence. What is worse, these influences absolutely dwarf and demoralize the childish character in the day when it should be unfolding God-ward like the petals of a flower to the sunlight.



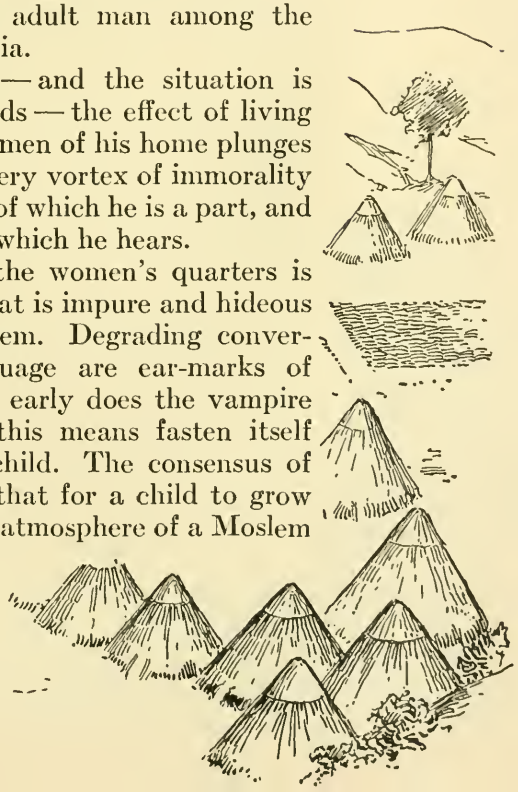
In the better homes boys and girls are separated while still young, taking their places in the quarters set aside respectively for men and

women. The taint of immorality is already coursing through their veins. The obscene sights and conversations encountered among both men and women in Moslem houses, can be nothing other than a stimulus to the natural precocity of the Moslem child in all that is impure and evil.

Dr. Robert E. Speer quotes Dr. Cochrin of Persia, a man who had unsurpassed opportunities for seeing the inner life of Mohammedan men, as telling him that he could not say, out of his long and intimate acquaintance as a doctor with men that he had ever met one pure-hearted or pure-lived adult man among the Mohammedans of Persia.

With this in mind — and the situation is general in Moslem lands — the effect of living exclusively among the men of his home plunges a young lad into the very vortex of immorality engendered by the life of which he is a part, and the lewd conversation which he hears.

The little maid in the women's quarters is familiarized with all that is impure and hideous in the life of the harem. Degrading conversation and foul language are ear-marks of Moslem society. Very early does the vampire of impurity through this means fasten itself upon the life of the child. The consensus of missionary opinion is that for a child to grow up pure-minded in the atmosphere of a Moslem



house is inconceivable. In this connection Miss Smith says: "We seek to put sweet stories of the Holy Child into their minds, and pure songs of a Happy Land on their lips, and to show them how good is ready obedience to simple commands. But it is no easy task; even as we repeat the story the evil word is hurled by one babe at another."

Out of so much that is fraught with the unspeakable heartbreak of wrecked childhood, it is with tears of joy that we hear our workers in Algiers saying:

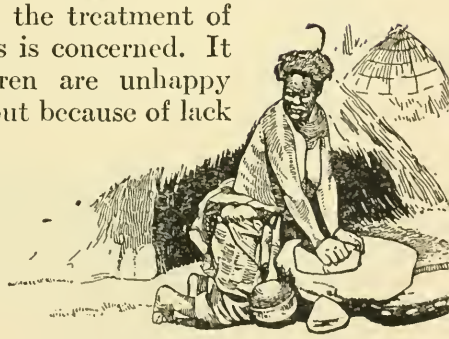
"We have heard the gospel told by baby lips, where no other would have had a hearing. 'Did you tell your people about Jesus?' we asked a girl of fourteen. 'I tried to,' was the reply, 'but they were too angry to listen. Only Z——— was allowed to tell how Jesus raised the dead and healed the sick, and old Uncle L——— wiped his eyes more than once.' Now little Z——— was not yet six years old. So we sow in hope, believing the seed is the living Word of God If we could only gather these fifty tinies together more often!"

Mr. Purdon, a missionary of our General Board in Tunis, writes of the atmosphere of the native home with which Methodist workers there are familiar: "The child is taught to lie, is encouraged to use obscene and profane language in play because it sounds amusing."

But again comes the cheering consciousness that the pure spiritual ozone of the gospel of Jesus Christ may dissipate pollution even such as this. One day, in her class of children in the native town in Algiers, the missionary, ever alert permanently to fix the truth she sought to teach, asked, "How do you hope some day to enter the heavenly city?" With a quick dash of native color, a fourteen-year-old girl answered, "I shall knock and the porter will open." "But, suppose," persisted the teacher, "he should ask what right you had to enter — what would you say?" Then there came softly and solemnly across the lips of the little Moslem girl the plea — the only plea which has held strong and sufficient through all the ages for sin-fettered souls — "I shall say, 'Christ died for me.'" But to make very sure one more query was put, "What are you doing now to prove that you serve him?" and came the answer, "I used to steal and lie; now I try to do neither."

DEFECTIVE FAMILY RELATIONS

The atmosphere of the Moslem home, however, is not unmixed with a certain sort of kindliness, so far at least as the treatment of the children by their parents is concerned. It is said that Moslem children are unhappy not because of lack of love, but because of lack

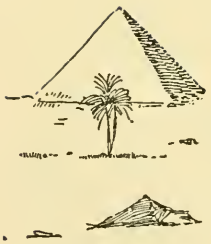


of knowledge of what is best for them, and lack of wisdom on the part of their parents in using what little knowledge they have.

When you reflect upon the status of inferiority of Moslem women, an opinion universally held, you are not surprised that the children, especially the boys of the family, hold the mother, along with the other women of the house, in great contempt. The Rev. J. J. Cooksey, a missionary of our General Board, writing upon this point from Tunis, says that in addition to foul language, lying, treachery and intrigue, which are common things of the home, "Small boys curse and strike their mothers, who glory in their manliness." So upon the sodden heart also of the Moslem mother descends the lash held in the hand of her son.

Both boys and girls play freely in the streets, the girl, because of her early marriage and seclusion, for a few short years only. Practically all children are neglected and uncontrolled.

This situation is one of serious proportions to our workers who in the homes at Algiers and Constantine must constantly meet it in the lives of the girls they seek to train. Miss Smith says: "Our girls need discipline, employment and guidance. They have no secular education, no home education, no moral training. The result is moral chaos." A laboratory demonstration of this is given upon occasion



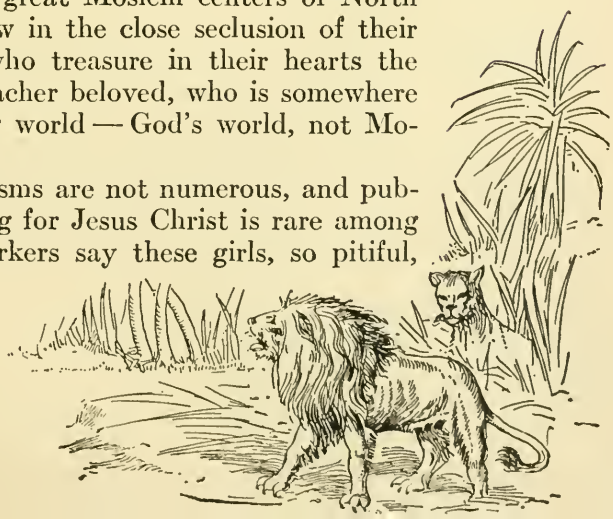
in the matter of their singing when, it is said, "They sing fairly well when they are not swept away by a mad desire suddenly to shout or try to sing falsetto!"

Sewing is insisted upon by the missionaries, not so much for "sewing's sake" as for teaching the girls in the native classes patience and self-control. A child may be learning well to ply the needle with her little brown fingers, and the teacher rejoices, only to be saddened by the little pupil's early departure because of marriage. But even in the sewing classes wild young hearts are reached, and lives are made purer and better and more wholesome, while in character these girls, exposed forever to what is unholy and impure, grow cleaner and gentler under the influence of Christian control.

IN FEAR FOR THEIR LIVES

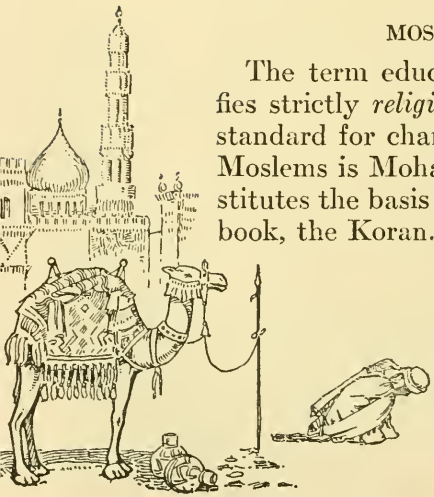
There is no way of computing the number of girls once under the teaching of our missionaries in these great Moslem centers of North Africa but now in the close seclusion of their own homes, who treasure in their hearts the words of a teacher beloved, who is somewhere out in the big world — God's world, not Mohammed's!

While baptisms are not numerous, and publicly witnessing for Jesus Christ is rare among them, our workers say these girls, so pitiful,



so young, carry with them into their married life standards of morality that are new to their race, and the knowledge of the hope of eternal life.

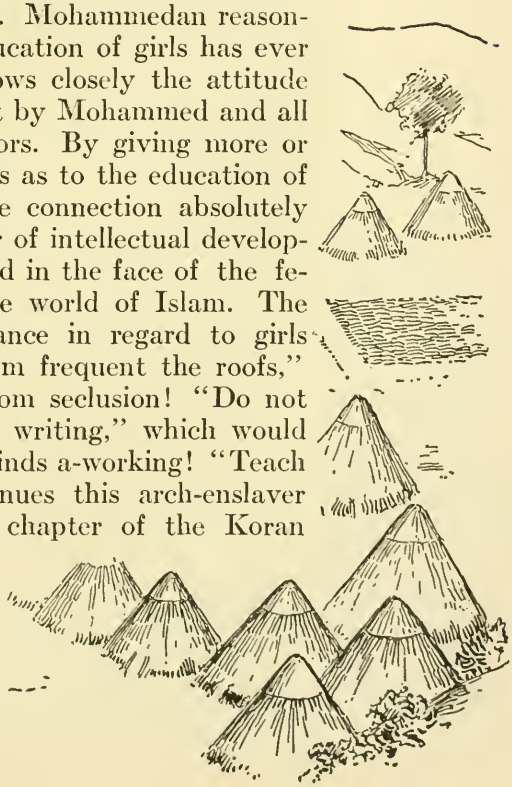
In fear for her very life, the lips of many a married Moslem girl are silent, when in her heart she treasures above everything the love of Jesus Christ. A little crippled Kabyle boy in one of the classes was asked by our teacher, "Mohand, do you still love the Lord Jesus, and do you try to follow him?" Quick came the answer: "Indeed I do and every night when the light goes out I kneel and ask him, 'O Christ, give to my aunt who loves you in secret, the faith, the courage, whatever it may cost her, to come out and be baptized.'" The agonizing experiences of our missionaries among these girls find expression in the cry of one of them: "When one remembers that only Moslem marriages lie before our girls, one longs with a great longing to see the men come into the Kingdom."



MOSLEM EDUCATION

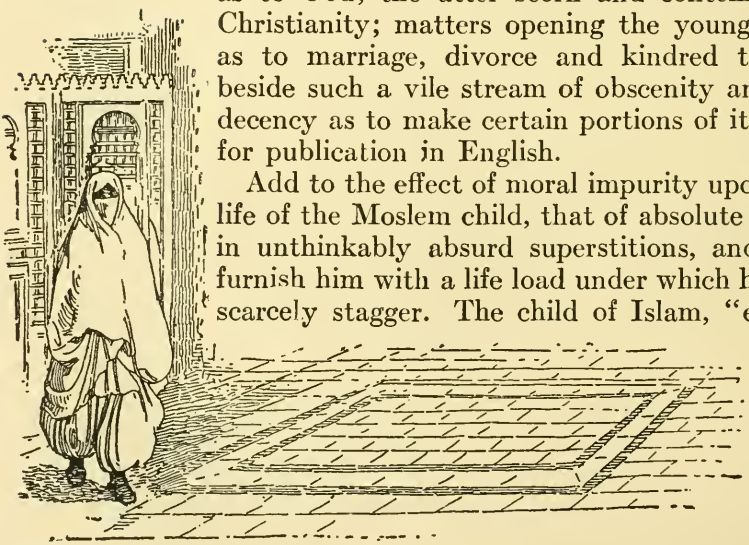
The term education in Moslem lands signifies strictly *religious* education. The universal standard for character among millions of little Moslems is Mohammed. The book which constitutes the basis of all learning is the Prophet's book, the Koran.

Except where governments have concerned themselves with the secular education of the Moslem children under their control, literacy among them is scarcely observable. In Egypt, where under the British regime there has been unusually favorable and continuous contact with the educational standards of the West, recent figures indicate that out of over a million of Moslem children between the ages of ten and fourteen, less than sixty-eight thousand can read, and of these but three thousand are girls! Probably in our North African field a similar count would show femininity intellectually very much more to the bad. Mohammedan reasoning apropos to the education of girls has ever followed and still follows closely the attitude taken upon the subject by Mohammed and all standard Islamic authors. By giving more or less specific instructions as to the education of boys, and in the same connection absolutely ignoring girls, the door of intellectual development has been slammed in the face of the female population of the world of Islam. The Prophet's one deliverance in regard to girls was: "Do not let them frequent the roofs," a temporary escape from seclusion! "Do not teach them the art of writing," which would be likely to set their minds a-working! "Teach them spinning," continues this arch-enslaver of women, "and the chapter of the Koran



called *En Nur*." The revelations in this particular chapter refer to women of known or suspected immoral life!

Moslem education at its best does little to reduce actual illiteracy, while it implants and nourishes the grossest superstitions, and feeds the childish mind upon literature which is corrupt and obscene. Dr. Zwemer says: "The religious primers published for the use of boys and girls even in Egypt contain matters concerning which every boy and girl should be in ignorance, and generally speaking, all Moslem religious literature is unfit for the mind of a child." A child's primer on religion, written by a notable Islamic theologian, and having an enormous circulation throughout Egypt and North Africa, clearly sets forth what, to the mind of the author, the Moslem child should be taught. It teaches preposterous doctrines as to God; the utter scorn and contempt of Christianity; matters opening the young eyes as to marriage, divorce and kindred topics, beside such a vile stream of obscenity and indecency as to make certain portions of it unfit for publication in English.



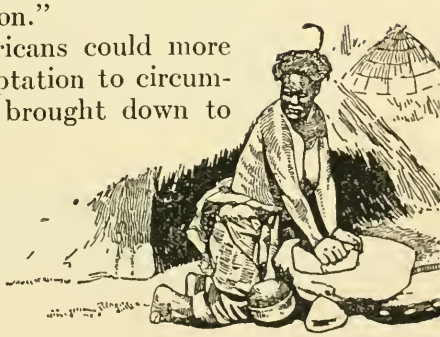
Add to the effect of moral impurity upon the life of the Moslem child, that of absolute belief in unthinkably absurd superstitions, and you furnish him with a life load under which he can scarcely stagger. The child of Islam, "every-

where and in all circumstances is born into a world of superstition." It is the first and all-important task of his mother to protect her child from a legion of "jinn," and the multitude of their close relations — devils and bad angels. Poor little youngster, hung about with all sorts of amulets, doubtless much in his way, and provided with *two* recording angels, one perched upon each of his infant shoulders!

The Occidental child may laugh, as he does, at tales from the Arabian Nights in which the "genii" figure, and in which sometimes "one of those evil Afrites whom the lord Solomon (upon whom be peace) did imprison in bottles of brass and cast into the sea," is pulled forth by a luckless fisherman! To the Moslem child all this is no fabrication of fancy. The goblins which are likely to "git" him are real goblins — as real as Haroun Al-Raschid himself.

At the beginning they are intellectually nimble enough, these boys and girls. Indeed we are informed by Christian teachers that to a degree they are wide-awake and intelligent but "this intelligence markedly diminishes as they grow out of childhood, probably due to the inherited influences of early marriages, and also to the methods of education."

Certainly no young Americans could more neatly turn the trick of adaptation to circumstances than the little lads brought down to

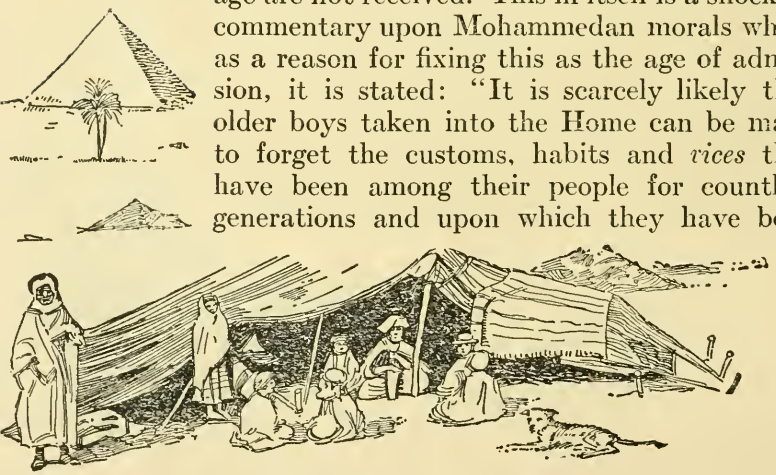


the Methodist Home for Boys in Algiers from the mountains of Kabylia. The superintendent, the Rev. J. D. Townsend, says of them: "These boys come down to us having never seen a train, a street car, an electric light or a moving picture. In two months they are living, acting and talking as if they had been brought up on Broadway."

THE NEED OF HOMES

The secular education of the children of North Africa where our mission centers are located is not in the hands of the missionaries, but under the direction of the French government. With the State thus monopolizing the educational interests, it was seen at the very beginning of our missionary activities in this field that for purposes of religious training Homes for both boys and girls must be provided.

The Homes for Arab and Kabyle boys maintained by our Board of Foreign Missions in Algiers, Constantine and Tunis have been strikingly successful. Boys over ten years of age are not received. This in itself is a shocking commentary upon Mohammedan morals when, as a reason for fixing this as the age of admission, it is stated: "It is scarcely likely that older boys taken into the Home can be made to forget the customs, habits and *vices* that have been among their people for countless generations and upon which they have been



(*Upper*) In the Garden at Les Aiglons
(*Lower*) Miss Collins Mothers the Babies

accustomed to look from their infancy." The enthusiastic workers in these institutions pronounce their boys as fine and healthy and peaceable as can anywhere be found.

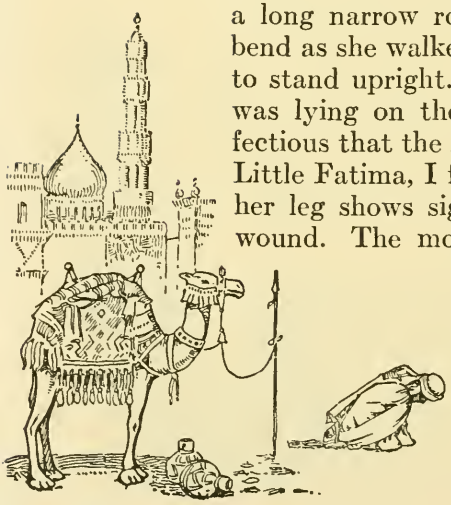
The majority of them will become Christian workers. Dr. Frease states that such an output has already commenced. Four of the native preachers are the first fruits of this work, and one boy has won a government scholarship which is carrying him through his medical training.

The beautiful Home for girls, "Les Aiglons" (The Eagles), established by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in Algiers, in 1915, is the answer to the believing prayers of our workers for years — the realization of a dream come true. High up on a hill it perches, this Eagle's Nest, away from the stifling atmosphere of the "old town," suffocating alike for bodies and souls. To it, since first it opened its doors in welcome, have come the little maids, rescued from hateful Moslem marriages. Here they may breathe, unveiled, the fresh air in God's own out-of-doors, and play in a real garden, and live through the golden days of a real childhood. In the end, please God, they will be Christian mothers, or as Bible women bearing the message of a Savior's love they will go in and out among the sad, secluded daughters of their own race.

The property itself was the first to be acquired by the Methodist Episcopal Church in all North Africa. The final purchase for our organization was effected by the persistent efforts of Bishop Hartzell and Dr. Frease, and the unwinding of much red tape in obtaining government recognition of a legal status for our denominational body.

Here are gathered today a joyous family of tenderly mothered little Arab and Kabyle girls, a family which even now taxes the capacity of "The Eagles." To secure one Moslem girl for Christian training in North Africa is nothing short of a miracle. What shall we say, then, of these days when in this almost untouched Moslem field, as bigoted as any under heaven, more girls are being offered than we can take? This very day comes a letter from Les Aiglons:

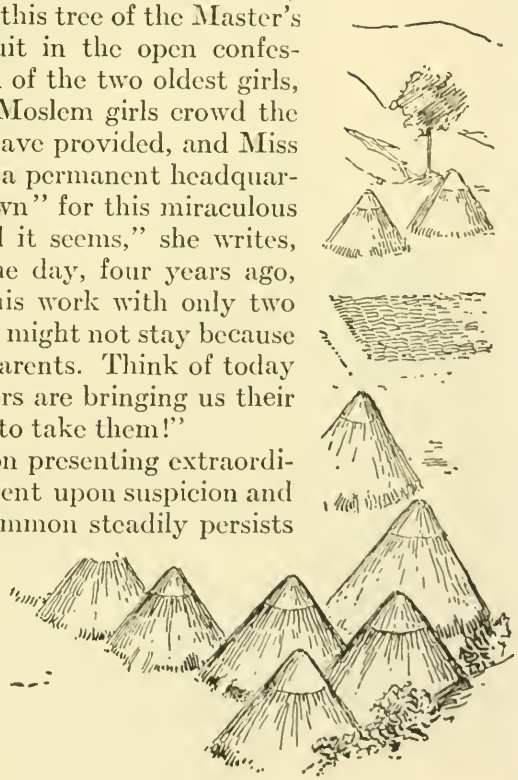
"I might have had another little Moslem girl today. Little Fatima took me 'home' with her after the class. I found her mother in a long narrow room, so low that she had to bend as she walked about, for it was impossible to stand upright. The father, too ill to move, was lying on the floor with an illness so infectious that the hospital refused to admit him. Little Fatima, I fear, has taken it, and already her leg shows signs of breaking into an open wound. The mother said: 'Why didn't you



take my little Malha?' And oh, she is so white and thin but—. You know we have prayed for the chance of saving these little Moslem girls for over twenty years!"

No room was there in the Eagle's Nest for poor little Fatima "so white and thin!" Already there are other little girls there such as she, for whom no support has been promised, yet whom the loving hearts of the women who mother them could not turn away.

The Home for Girls, in hoary old Constantine, partially supported by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, has an almost tragic story of growth. Already has this tree of the Master's own planting borne fruit in the open confession and public baptism of the two oldest girls, with others to follow. Moslem girls crowd the larger house which we have provided, and Miss Loveless is pleading for a permanent headquarters building "all our own" for this miraculous work. "How wonderful it seems," she writes, "as we look back to the day, four years ago, when we commenced this work with only two girls, and we feared they might not stay because of the bigotry of their parents. Think of today when fathers and mothers are bringing us their children and begging us to take them!"



In Tunis, in a situation presenting extraordinary difficulties, consequent upon suspicion and bigotry, Miss Annie Hammon steadily persists

in her efforts to gather in the girls. The demand here in better homes for girl servants, the dependence for a living of many poor families upon what a little girl may beg or earn, and a deeply ingrained hatred of Christianity, make results difficult and slow. Several girls, however, are now under Miss Hammon's care.

Reference has previously been made to the large numbers of people from southern Europe who have flocked to the Mediterranean region of North Africa. These come from different countries, but naturally the majority are from France. Among the women of this Roman Catholic population of Algiers, who are constantly and in increasing numbers throwing off the yoke of Rome, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society has a small but well-established work. Classes for the religious instruction of women and girls are regularly held. Miss Mary Anderson, in charge of this important department, greatly rejoices over the second one of the girls in her French Bible Class who has come out definitely for missionary service. One is now on our staff in the Girls' Home in Constantine, the other an assistant in Algiers. So does the great Captain of our salvation call out his recruits.

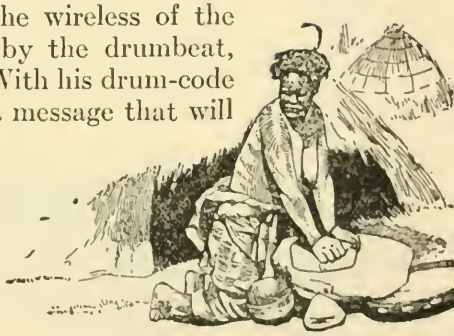
Sadly they wrote after little Dah'byia had gone to the heavenly mansion for which she was so ready, "Is it prophetic, that like Abraham

of old, the first plot of land we hold in a country we claim for Christ should be a grave?"

Yes, before the days when happy voices rang through the garden of Les Aiglons, our Society's first holding in North Africa was a grave — a child's grave! For the sake of the Holy Child, for the sake of that one little grave, must the hearts of the daughters of Methodism brood in great, overwhelming tenderness over these little stray lambs of Islam. "The problem is no longer to get children. They are being thrust upon us. We shall be neglecting a distinct call from God if we do not step into this open door and seek to save the children of God."

THE DRUMBEAT OF THE BUSH

A curious thing is that African drum they tell us about. For Africa is a land of drums. Nervous folks take notice! Quite simple of construction is this drum, too, for such an important maker of noises — a bit of the hollowed-out trunk of a tree with a skin of some animal covering the ends, two short slits cut in the top of the log, and there you are! Mighty clever are the black people in drumbeating, mind you. It is the original wireless, the wireless of the bush. They send messages by the drumbeat, as you would by telegraph. With his drum-code a chief or warrior can send a message that will



be perfectly understood by another chief or warrior many miles away. Henry M. Stanley's movements were known to a nicety by the dusky tribes of the forest among which he fared. And when the drum beats for *you*, there is nothing whatever to do but go! Be it to the feast, or to war, or for the woman palavers — for there *is* a drumbeat for women — you must move promptly and in time with that call of the drum.

So right here we will give the drumbeat for the children of black Africa, if you please. And to your imagination there will surely come again, though far away from classic Hamelin Town,

> "A rustling that seems like a bustling
> Of merry crowds jostling at pitching and hustling"—

and over fourteen millions of little Africans, living from the twentieth parallel and south all over the continent, are responding to the drum which beats for them!

Over one million and a half of these live south of the equator, the biggest part of the number being little pagan people who, Topsy-like, have "just growed." It is among these, in Angola and Rhodesia, that the missionaries of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society are at work — fine young women they are, some of them with university degrees affixed to their names.

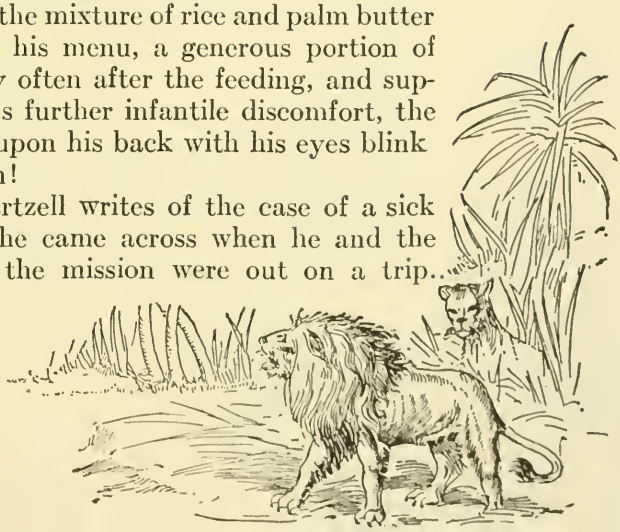
THE LITTLE BLACK BABY

As lives one child in Africa who survives the vicissitudes of entrance into his black world, and the years allotted to childhood, so for the most part live they all.

Poor little black baby — his mother, though she loves him, has very queer ideas about his upbringing. As likely as not she laughs in a vastly superior way when the missionary tries to teach her how to feed the little mite properly. Her way is to hold him in her lap, his back to her, her motherly hand full of exactly the same sort of "sadza" the grown-ups eat, held conveniently under his chin. Then she proceeds literally to stuff that baby, using in the process instead of a spoon the forefinger of her free hand. When the poor little stomach is distended to actual hardness and he is probably howling with stomach ache his mother is sure that, for the time being, he has had enough!

In Liberia the ceremony of feeding is varied by adding to the mixture of rice and palm butter which makes his menu, a generous portion of pepper. Very often after the feeding, and supposedly to his further infantile discomfort, the baby is laid upon his back with his eyes blinking at the sun!

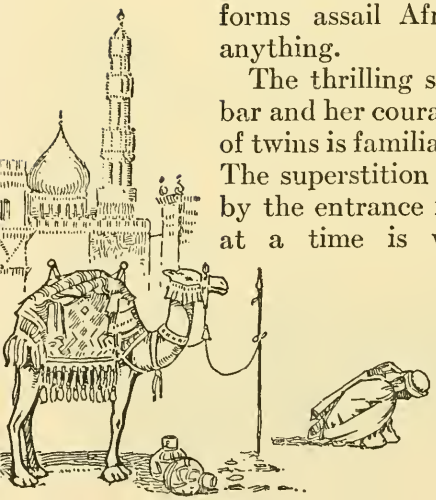
Bishop Hartzell writes of the case of a sick child whom he came across when he and the doctor from the mission were out on a trip..



The bishop says: "I heard a baby crying most of the night in a house not far from where I slept. The doctor, going out in the morning, found that the mother had disobeyed his orders as to food for the sick child, and commanded her to show him what she was feeding the baby, and he showed it to me. Its odor and appearance would suggest that it had been taken from an ordinary swill-barrel. It is difficult for the heathen mother to understand that milk is food."

One of our missionaries says that the mothers of babies who suffer from digestional disturbances have often come to her asking for medicine to cure them from the "snake" which was causing the difficulty!

Human life is cheap in Africa, and vital statistics including those on infant mortality are not available. The testimony of missionaries goes to show that unnumbered multitudes of babies die in infancy, and that a child robust enough to survive the terrors which in many forms assail African baby days can endure anything.



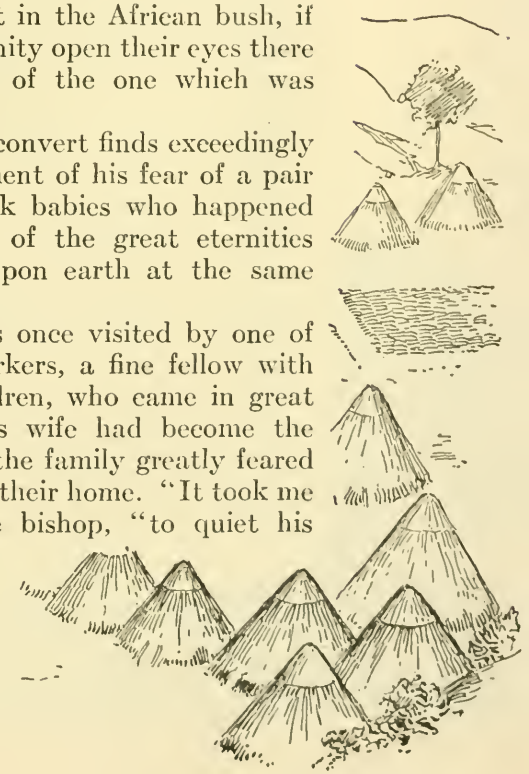
The thrilling story of Mary Slessor of Calabar and her courageous fight against the murder of twins is familiar to the mission-reading world. The superstition that a household is bewitched by the entrance into it of more than one baby at a time is widespread. This unnatural

practice is perfectly familiar to Methodist workers in our various South African fields. The putting out of the way of such surplus additions to the family is to the pagan mind merely destroying the power of some evil spirits who enter it in this fashion. One of our church missionaries knew of twins' having been destroyed in an out-station near our headquarters by being covered with hot stones.

Governments are doing much to suppress this most inhuman custom, but even with their vigilance it is seldom that a pair of twins is to be seen. Very secret and mysterious happenings there may be in a hut in the African bush, if two little bits of humanity open their eyes there in the night, instead of the one which was expected.

Even the Christian convert finds exceedingly difficult the abandonment of his fear of a pair of innocent little black babies who happened to walk in the path of the great eternities together and arrive upon earth at the same time.

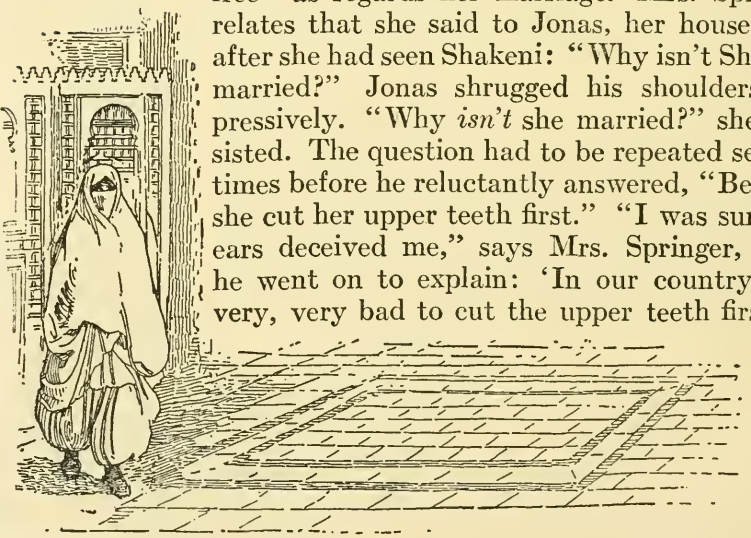
Bishop Hartzell was once visited by one of his leading native workers, a fine fellow with a wife and three children, who came in great distress of mind. His wife had become the mother of twins, and the family greatly feared the curse of God upon their home. "It took me some time," says the bishop, "to quiet his



fears. It greatly helped him when I told him about my own beautiful twin sisters, and how happy we were to have them."

TOOTH TROUBLES

It is all too true that the African baby really does "take its life in its hands!" Many and dreadful are the meshes of the net of witchcraft, spread for his ignorant, unwary little feet. To cut the upper teeth first is inexcusable in any infant! It plainly indicates witch associations, and should the child be a girl and grow to maidenhood no husband will await her. The story of Shakeni, a girl at Old Umtali, as related by Mrs. Springer, well illustrates with what a grip such an absurd superstition may hold the native. This girl, although strikingly handsome, had reached the extreme age of twenty or thereabouts, and was still "fancy free" as regards her marriage. Mrs. Springer relates that she said to Jonas, her house boy, after she had seen Shakeni: "Why isn't Shakeni married?" Jonas shrugged his shoulders impressively. "Why *isn't* she married?" she persisted. The question had to be repeated several times before he reluctantly answered, "Because she cut her upper teeth first." "I was sure my ears deceived me," says Mrs. Springer, "but he went on to explain: 'In our country it is very, very bad to cut the upper teeth first. A

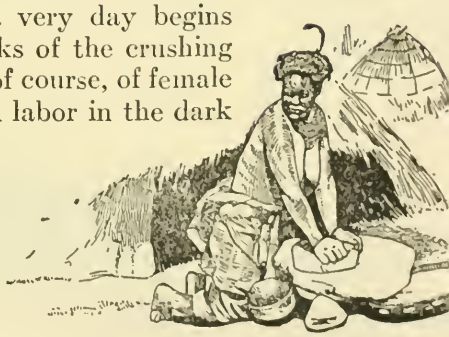


child that cuts the upper teeth first is bewitched and it is the custom of our people to bury such a one alive. I suppose her mother loved her child and didn't want to do it, and now there isn't a man in all the country who will marry her.'"

That benign personality, the family physician, is an unknown quantity in the African hut, unless a missionary doctor chances to be near by. The terrors of the witch-doctor, possessor of the black art — and the blacker *heart* — are well known. A little knowledge of medicinal herbs is his sole compass of *materia medica*, and demonology his real stock in trade. Hideous in aspect, cruel to the core, rejoicing in diabolical practices, he is the very incarnation of the evil one, and pagan Africa groans under his fiendish tyranny. An easy prey to his wiles of witchcraft are sorrowing mothers and their little children, of all his victims the weakest and most hopeless.

TOILING CHILDHOOD

As to the matter of child labor, there is no excitement, and concerning it, within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, there has never been a breath of agitation. When in Africa childhood itself begins, that very day begins the binding upon infant backs of the crushing burden of work. We speak, of course, of female child labor, for of other child labor in the dark

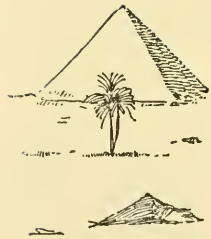


land there is none. Of real girlhood itself there is so pitifully little. The small maid, a diminutive replica of her mother, almost before she can toddle is carrying a load or trudging along to the garden in the wake of an older girl whose child she is. Every subsequent chapter of her life, from the day she first brings up the firewood to the hut, reads exactly alike — work, work, work.

There are games, a few, they tell us, played by these children of the bush. Experts as they are in imitating bird notes and animal sounds, they use them to account in their sports. Our Miss Edith Bell tells us of one:

"I have frequently observed a group of children hide in the grass or bush and imitate the chatter of monkeys so perfectly that passers-by mistake them for a troupe of these persistent chatterers. At other times bird calls are given so that answers are received from a real bird which mistakes the note for that of its mate.

"A favorite pastime for evening is to assemble after the meal for animal games. Contests are held and the best imitators are highly applauded. My first observation of this sport was on a dark evening. A girl of possibly ten years, who had hidden in the gloom back from the fire's glow, uttered a series of dull barks which usually indicate the proximity of a troop of baboons. In fright I turned my head, expecting to see



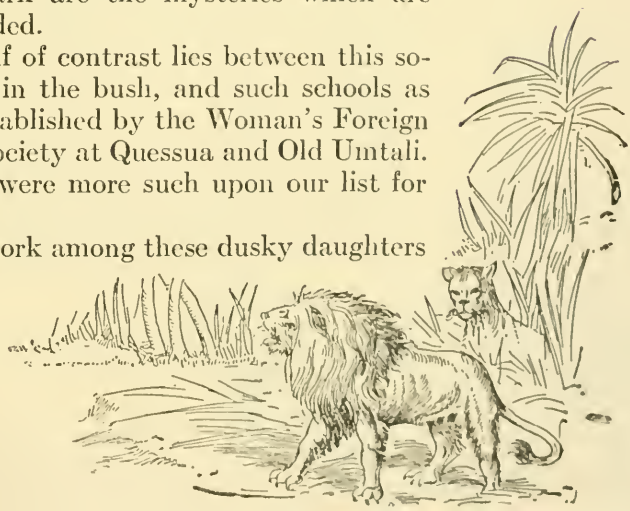
one very near. On doing so I was amazed and terrified to see an animal-like creature bound on all fours from the darkness, and hop about among the girls seated there. The whites of the rolling eyes and the prominent teeth gleamed in the firelight as the hideous-looking beast jumped around, frightening us all. The picture was so weird, the imitation so perfect, that quite a few moments elapsed before I could be convinced the performer was Matiwoma, and not a real baboon."

A CONTRAST IN SCHOOLS

There is the semblance of a school, to be sure, somewhere out in the bush. In one of these a boy of tender years is hideously taught to be a man. In a similar one little girls are inducted into a knowledge of the things — and evil enough they are — which will some day fall within the sphere of womanhood. Deeply hidden in some forest place is the "bush school." Deep and dark are the mysteries which are there expounded.

A great gulf of contrast lies between this so-called school in the bush, and such schools as have been established by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society at Quessua and Old Umtali. Would there were more such upon our list for Africa!

Christian work among these dusky daughters

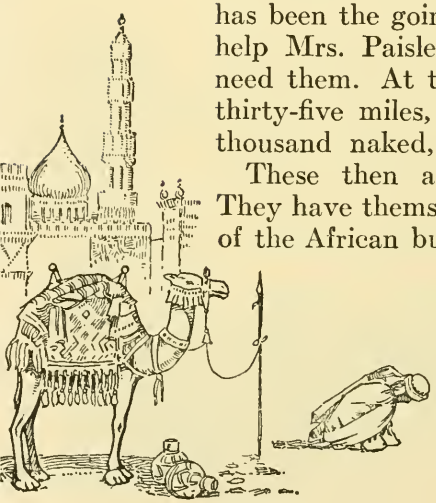


of a degraded race has demonstrated that very pure white hearts may beat within very black bodies. To be sure when they come — back with the missionary who has been itinerating, possibly — they are unclad, unkempt, unclean. They are terrified when the little mission organ is played, and ask, "What makes the box cry?" Having lived in real "flats" all their lives, they are desperately afraid to even attempt to climb the stairs. Oh, yes, they are crude enough.

But wait! We hear the government inspector saying in his report, after he visits our schools: "I saw the girls sewing, washing, ironing, etc. Everything was going smoothly — the girls looked clean and neat and it was not difficult to see from their bright faces that they were happy in their work. A feature of the education of these girls is the elementary training given in the care of babies."

The missionary, too, knows all of this, yet she writes: "The best thing this year (1916) has been the going out of three of our girls to help Mrs. Paisley with those people who so need them. At that place, within a radius of thirty-five miles, there are more than thirty thousand naked, hungry, uncared-for souls."

These then are real Student Volunteers. They have themselves emerged from the kraals of the African bush into the white radiance of



lives illuminated by Divine Love. Now they retrace their steps, turning once more toward the dark forest, toward their own kin. And — ah, the wonder of it — cutting long shafts of brightness through pagan gloom there enters with them Jesus Christ, the Light of the World!